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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 1 July 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

later: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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96-80863 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATION:

(a) COORDINATION OF ACTIVITIES ON A SYSTEM-WIDE BASIS: STRENGTHENING COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM AND THE BRETTON WOODS INSTITUTIONS IN THE AREAS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT ALL LEVELS, INCLUDING THE FIELD LEVEL (continued) (E/1996/72 and Corr.1)

Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that any discussion of strengthening collaboration between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions would be incomplete without consideration of the references to social and economic progress contained in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations and in resolution 50/5 (1995), and of the need to reconcile the development mission of the United Nations with the independence of the Bretton Woods institutions. Focusing on the principle of sustainable human-centred development, inspired by the emerging consensus at the major United Nations conferences, those two sets of institutions had achieved progress in response to the new development agenda. Much remained to be done, however, particularly to alleviate the negative effects of structural adjustment.

The Australian delegation was broadly satisfied that the Bretton Woods institutions were becoming more actively involved in policies aimed at alleviating poverty, responding to the particular problems of Africa and mitigating the negative effects of structural adjustment. Moreover, their unparalleled cooperation on the United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS provided a possible blueprint for future cooperation.

At the same time, the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions needed to do more in the field, working hand in hand at the country level to respond to the development challenges and opportunities created by the decolonization process, a task to which the discussions at the Council itself should seek to contribute.

Mr. POERNOMO (Indonesia) said that the scope of development assistance should be broadened to help developing countries at risk of permanent

marginalization. To that end, there was a vital need for strengthened cooperation and broad harmonization of priorities between the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions. The proposed one-day policy dialogue on important development issues to be held during the General Assembly would be a practical step in that direction.

Although such cooperation was important, the United Nations should be careful, however, not to add to the conditionalities often associated with the development assistance given by the Bretton Woods institutions. Experience had shown that using financial assistance as a means of effecting policy change was often detrimental to growth and development.

In order to maximize the benefits of development cooperation and provide a more structured arrangement than at present, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council should formulate guidelines for cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, providing a clearer focus and direction to their work on policy and in the field. In addition, better use should be made of the resident coordinator system as a way of instituting sustained dialogue and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. Working in harmony with national plans and strategies, those institutions should develop a more balanced approach to achieving sustainable development, focusing on "self-propelling growth schemes".

Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland), endorsing the views expressed by the delegation of Italy on behalf of the European Union and by the delegation of Australia, said that the United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions were faced with the task of improving cooperation in order to make better use of diminishing development assistance resources. In that regard, considerable progress had already been made, with closer links being developed between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Bretton Woods institutions, and greater intellectual convergence on policy-making and in the follow-up to United Nations conferences.

However, much remained to be done. While mutual participation at round tables and in consultative bodies had improved, Switzerland did not support proposals for broadening attendance at regular meetings. It favoured instead the holding of special, thematic meetings to which specialized agencies would be invited. There was also a need for more systematic cooperation in the field,

with the partners working together to elaborate country strategy notes and programmes, as well as development assistance plans.

In implementing the programme approach, there should be more co-financing and parallel financing by the partners, making better use of their comparative advantage. In that context, the evolving relationship between UNDP and the World Bank might be a model for future forms of cooperation.

Both sets of institutions should improve professional training for their personnel working in specialized sectors, particularly at the regional and local levels. To that end, they should organize personnel secondments on a more frequent basis. The Secretariat might also consider conducting a number of cooperation case-studies, partly funded by the Swiss delegation, as a complement to the efforts of interdepartmental working groups on ways of improving cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions.

In the long run, however, such efforts could only succeed if the United Nations had sufficient resources to play its part in international cooperation for development.

Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) said that the issue of institutional cooperation had become more urgent as globalization of markets threatened to undermine intergovernmental collaboration. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should seek to enhance their relations through a comprehensive, transparent and constructive approach to development cooperation. In order to achieve the goal of greater coordination, the Bretton Woods institutions should review their policies and change their philosophy, taking into account not only economic factors.

Unless the Bretton Woods institutions contributed effectively to solving such problems as external debt, the negative effects of structural adjustment and the decline in resources for development, it would be difficult to achieve real interinstitutional collaboration. Moreover, without resources or a clear commitment in solving the financial crisis in the United Nations, the discussion of coordination and collaboration would be little more than an intellectual exercise.

The Secretariat had made some commendable recommendations but it was not clear whether the United Nations should assist in mitigating the effects of structural adjustment programmes, since it was the Bretton Woods institutions which had insisted on the developing countries' adopting such programmes. The

recommendation that the concessional assistance mechanisms such as the International Development Association should be reviewed was also a cause of serious concern. Humanitarian assistance should not be increased at the expense of resources for development. Moreover the recommendation was inappropriate since it had nothing to do with interinstitutional collaboration.

Mr. YUAN Shaofu (China) said that his delegation believed that strengthening collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions was only a means to the end of being able to respond in a timely, flexible and positive way to the changing development needs and priorities of recipient countries. Such collaboration should be linked to the ongoing reforms of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields. In order to derive maximum benefit from assistance it was necessary first to strengthen the policy dialogue at the headquarters level. At the country level, all institutions must fully respect the wishes and preferences of the recipient Government. In practice, coordination between the various organizations and agencies of the United Nations system had not always been smooth and successful.

The type of assistance provided by the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions differed in character, criteria and approach. There was understandable concern that collaboration would cause the operational activities for development of the United Nations system to be constrained by the restrictive loan policies of the Bretton Woods institutions, thereby adding new conditionalities; United Nations technical assistance must maintain its neutrality and grant nature.

Mr. KAMANDO (United Republic of Tanzania) said that his delegation was pleased at the emerging consensus on the need to intensify cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. In order to have effective programme delivery at the country level, it was necessary also to collaborate in the formulation of policy. His delegation would like to see intensified collaboration in harmonizing the process of preparing country policy framework papers, country strategy notes and the recently introduced country cooperation framework paper, but that process should not lead to the introduction of added conditionalities.

Tanzania had been pleased to hear from the representative of the World Bank that structural adjustment was dead. His Government was of the view that the

Bretton Woods institutions should adopt a more flexible and realistic approach, in which reform measures would be based on development strategies prepared by the recipient country in accordance with its own priorities. It welcomed the Special Initiative on Africa, and would like the Secretariat to explain how the Special Initiative and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s would be made operational.

Mr. GOUMENNY (Observer for Ukraine) said that strengthened cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions was one of the main conditions for the establishment of a reliable financial basis from which to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in overcoming their economic instability, allowing significant future savings of financial resources. Increased resources provided by international development organizations would also allow the strengthening of market economies, leading to greater international security.

At the national level, more coordination was needed to assist countries with economies in transition to develop market strategies that would mesh with other international efforts. His delegation commended the reorganization of the World Bank/UNDP task force, which was to play a greater role in harmonizing policy. Linking the preparatory processes of the policy framework paper and country strategy notes would be very useful, as would the memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements between agencies.

Mrs. SIRAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that recent trends in development cooperation suggested that the sharp division of responsibilities between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions was becoming blurred. The development banks were reorienting a sizeable part of their investment towards the social sector and the private sector was now providing considerable contributions to infrastructure. Since a multilateral institution's policies were determined by the States members and since prime responsibility for coordination of development aid in a country lay with the recipient State, real coordination would not be possible without the political will and support of States.

Even though World Bank loans were required to make a profit and the United Nations system provided assistance on a subsidy basis, closer links between the two would be helpful for many reasons. Coordination must be based on a concept of complementarity between the two major multilateral actors, which might change

form over the course of the programming process. At the beginning of the process, the United Nations system might be better placed than an investment body to help Member States to shape their sectoral policies and analyse their needs. Later on the Bretton Woods institutions might have a major role to play in designing investment programmes.

The triennial review of operational activities had shown that collaboration at the national level was, at best, partial, and often only sporadic. On the other hand, at the international level, collaboration was becoming more systematic. Some practical ways of ensuring closer collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions would include formalizing their cooperation on certain points, making effective use of the central role and system-wide expertise of the resident coordinator and aiming at greater complementarity and consistency between the country strategy note and major economic policy documents.

Ms. RODRIGUEZ (Observer for Cuba) said that her country was prepared to support any initiative to resolve or alleviate the problems of developing countries. Progress had been made in cooperation among the institutions of the United Nations system, and the World Bank's expertise in environmental issues was well known. Nevertheless, Cuba believed that structural adjustment programmes had had a significant negative impact on the majority of developing countries, particularly in the social sector.

The Bretton Woods institutions had a specific mandate, a limited membership, a weighted voting system and provided loans, in contrast with the open and universal membership of the United Nations, the equality and equity of its system of voting and governance, and the grant nature of its aid. Therefore, her delegation was of the view that the main purpose of cooperation between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system should be to increase available resources on a predictable, sustained and secure basis. The neutral, multilateral, universal and voluntary nature of United Nations activities must be preserved, especially as they related to development. The operational activities of the United Nations system could not be based on the conditionalities practised by the international financial institutions. Furthermore, the role of the General Assembly as the main forum for political, economic and financial decision-making should not be weakened.

At the field level, collaboration was based on the use of the country strategy note mechanism. It should be stressed that the preparation of such an instrument was voluntary, and the decision should be for the Government alone to make. Use of the country strategy note to strengthen collaboration could give rise to discrimination against those countries which had decided not to prepare such a note. Cooperation at the field level must be based on national priorities established by the Governments themselves.

Mr. AGUILAR (Observer for the United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that as part of its reform programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) had launched a special initiative to broaden its cooperation with other organizations in the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. UNIDO had reached agreement with the World Trade Organization (WTO) to support an efficient international trading system in the manufacturing field, and had signed memorandums of understanding with other agencies to increase cooperation in the fields of science, technology, investment promotion and enterprise development.

UNIDO and the World Bank had agreed to focus their cooperation on privatization and industrial enterprise restructuring, quality and standards in industry, competitiveness and productivity of small and medium-sized enterprises, and design and implementation of build-operate-transfer schemes in developing countries.

At the operational level, UNIDO had implemented the technical cooperation components of projects funded by bank loans and credits. A total of 17 such projects with a total value of $16 million had currently been approved. They covered a wide range of issues including sustainable industrial development strategies, human resource development, privatization, industrial rehabilitation and maintenance and institutional capacity-building.

UNIDO and the International Finance Corporation were also planning joint activities to promote private investment in developing countries, and the World Bank's Economic Development Institute had collaborated with UNIDO in providing training to potential managers from countries with transitional economies. UNIDO and the World Bank had also cooperated closely in the implementation and integrated follow-up to major United Nations conferences. Within the United Nations system, UNIDO remained the primary source of industrial statistics.

Mr. AMORIM (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the member countries of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions at the field level could not be improved without greater cocperation at the intergovernmental and secretariat levels. While the civil war in the development family over structural adjustment was officially over, discrepancies still remained between the policy framework provided by the United Nations on issues related to economic growth, social development and environmental protection, and the strategies followed by the Bretton Woods institutions.

The promotion of greater cooperation between the two groups required a comprehensive approach that encompassed not only new initiatives and measures at the operational level but also closer collaboration at the conceptual level. Pragmatism could not survive without some degree of intellectual convergence. He therefore regretted the current gap between the willingness to promote cooperation at the field level and the reservations that still prevented more substantial debates between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions on central economic issues. He also regretted the failure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to give concrete responses during the current session to the questions raised by the Council concerning strengthened cooperation between the two groups at the macroeconomic level.

Turning to the note by the Secretariat on operational activities of the United Nations for international development coordination (E/1996/72), he said that the countries of MERCOSUR were particularly concerned about the reference to linking the preparatory processes of the policy framework paper and country strategy note. It would be useful to know what the implications of that linkage were in terms of the decision-making capacity of recipient countries with respect to their own programmes.

With regard to the common understanding of the 20/20 initiative, it would be interesting to know how the institutions in question envisaged their respective roles in the implementation of that initiative. He supported the suggestions made in paragraph 12 of the note by the Secretariat to avoid situations in which the Bretton Woods institutions initiated and implemented projects falling within the competence of other agencies without adequate consultations or the engagement of their regional and national offices.

The countries of MERCOSUR would welcome clarification of the proposal to establish mechanisms in support of regional offices of smaller agencies and of how such mechanisms could strengthen regional integration processes. Concerning joint meetings between the Council and other bodies, it would be interesting to know why only the Bank/Fund Development Committee had been mentioned in the note of the Secretariat. Finally, given the growing importance of regional integration processes in the developing world and in the international economy as a whole, the note should have made more direct reference to cooperation at the regional level.

Mr. GALVEZ (Chile) said that the two major objectives of economic and social development were to eradicate poverty and improve the quality of life of people everywhere. The attainment of those objectives required closer collaboration between the United Nations development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as a dialogue between Governments and other development actors on the importance of good governance at both the national and international levels. The notion of good governance in the service of people-centred economic and social development needed to be further elaborated at the conceptual level as part of the emerging intellectual convergence on what constituted sound development policies.

Given the existing consensus that economic and social development should be people-centred, it was now for the international community to develop a framework for good governance at the national and international levels aimed at achieving that objective. Towards that end, the Inter-Agency Task Force on the enabling environment for social and economic development should focus on good governance in the sense of the importance of the rule of law, including an independent judiciary, to the achievement of economic and social development; good governance, in the sense of the effectiveness of the State machinery; and good governance in terms of broad community participation in public life.

Mr. KRLIU (Observer for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said that the ultimate objective of closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions was not to compromise the latter's indépen ence but to enhance the ability of States to influence their work in a positive way. It was important for both the United Nations development agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to become more actively involved in the region of the Balkans. Cooperation between the two groups could

help to speed up economic development and hasten the Europeanization of the region. In that connection, General Assembly resolution 50/80 B provided a good basis for the activities of United Nations agencies in the region.

Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Observer for Kazakstan) said that international development cooperation could become more productive through closer collaboration between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions based on the commonality of interests and better support for national development efforts. Such collaboration currently encompassed a broad range of activities in the areas of economic reform, social development and the environment, among others. Her delegation welcomed the suggestions contained in the note by the Secretariat (E/1996/72) for the further strengthening of that collaboration at all levels, including the field level.

Kazakstan wished to acknowledge the major role played by UNDP in strengthening coordination within the United Nations system and in assisting newly independent States in formulating development strategies and strengthening management capacities. Together with the World Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), UNDP had provided substantial support for the preparation of the Aral Sea Action Plan, which was designed to reverse 40 years of water resource mismanagement and environmental destruction in the countries of the Aral Sea basin.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (E/1996/4 and Corr.1, E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (E/1996/61)

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on coordination of United Nations system activities for poverty eradication (E/1996/61), said that it was important for the Council at its current session to provide a sense of direction to the work of the United Nations system in the field of poverty eradication.

The report focused on three principal areas: coordinated United Nations support for and availability of resources for poverty eradication activities at the field level, mainstreaming the gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication, and a harmonized and integrated approach to intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication. United Nations

activities in support of poverty eradication at the field level must be carried out within the framework of the strategies which national Governments had committed themselves to formulate at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. Country-level coordination of those activities was in fact the primary responsibility of the Government in all recipient countries. However, the resident coordinator system played an important role as a coordination mechanism as well, as it enhanced harmonization and cooperation within the United Nations system at the country level and promoted the integration of United Nations system support with national development orientations.

With regard to the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication, the message from the Fourth World Conference on Women was that, given the increasing feminization of poverty and unemployment, gender equality concerns should be reflected in the work of all United Nations bodies concerned with poverty eradication.

Of crucial importance was the need for a harmonized and integrated approach to intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication. Because poverty eradication was high on the priorities of Member States, the issue was considered in many different forums and often in a repetitive and unfocused way. It was essential to avoid such fragmentation of the discussion and to provide focused and coherent policy direction through the intergovernmental process. The policy framework chart on page 36 of the report showed how the mandates of the various bodies involved in poverty eradication could be organized in a way that ensured the unity of policy directions and approaches through the General Assembly and the Council. Indeed, improved coordination at the field and inter-secretariat levels could help to ensure that poverty eradication became the organizing principle around which United Nations development activities were carried out.

Mr. HENZE (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. ACUÑA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group agreed with the Secretary-General's view that the eradication of poverty was a major challenge for the United Nations. Given the variety of mandates and activities of bodies within the United Nations system, harmonization and coordination were crucial. Poverty was no longer a country-specific problem, and the Secretary-General's report correctly stated that the United Nations system should be an advocate for the poor. However, the

Organization was answerable to Member States and should respond to the mandates which emerged from the system. In that regard, he reminded the Council that the international community had committed itself to the eradication of poverty through decisive action at both national and international level.

At the same time declining resource commitments to multilateral development institutions had made it very difficult for those institutions to respond adequately to the massive challenge which they faced. Those cuts threatened to undermine the poverty-eradication objectives agreed at major international conferences. New and additional resources therefore had to be mobilized. In that connection, his delegation hoped that the phrase "total allocations for multilateral institutions" in Recommendation 2 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61) should read "total allocations from multilateral institutions".

The Group had been surprised to find that the spirit, context and language of the Copenhagen Programme of Action had not been included in the Secretary-General's report. The Programme of Action clearly stated that work carried out by developing countries with respect to development indicators should be specifically taken into account, and that the national capacities of developing countries should be strengthened through technical assistance.

His delegation also wished to point out that participation by representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the resident coordinator system had been uneven and varied from country to country. Country strategy notes should always be coordinated with the relevant country's overall plans and programmes. Because country strategy notes were always voluntary and Government-driven, other ways of ensuring coordinated response from the United Nations system should also be explored. Strengthened cooperation between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions should not lead to new conditionalities or turn operational activities into the same restrictive policies normally associated with programme lending.

International cooperation on eradication of poverty should take place not only at the country level but at all levels. At the policy level, the system should be capable of providing coherent advice on economic and social policy.

Although the market economy was generally believed to be the most efficient way of ensuring economic progress, such a consensus should not imply the end of development strategies. Wholesale conversion to market economics would not

automatically produce solutions to the serious problems currently afflicting the international and national economies. In that regard his delegation wished to highlight the importance of the role of the International Labour Organization in coordinating efforts with the United Nations system to promote programmes for generating productive employment. The Commission for Social Development should maintain a broad approach in dealing with the issue of poverty eradication, while the contribution of the functional commissions should be confined to their own fields of competence in so far as they related to poverty eradication.

Direct programmes to alleviate poverty had to be supplemented by parallel effective economic policies which generated employment and determined a better pattern of growth. His delegation therefore reiterated the importance of greater coordination among the various organizations of the United Nations system. No single organization had the mandate or capacity to tackle poverty in its entirety. Differences in mandates should be a source of strength within the system and make for a comprehensive approach to poverty eradication. Such potential strength could become a weakness, however, if various organizations in the international system presented countries with differing policy signals. To be effective, policy advice had to be consistent and to comprise a coherent set of mutually reinforcing policy recommendations for country-level action.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Ireland) speaking on behalf of the European Union and Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the primary responsibility for the assessment of poverty situations and the formulation and implementation of national poverty eradication plans and programmes lay with Governments, and the role of the United Nations system was to support Governments in their efforts. In order to fulfil that role, the United Nations system must adopt a coordinated and integrated approach both at Headquarters and in the field with regard to implementing the outcome of recent conferences and issuing policy guidance measures relating to the eradication of poverty. What was needed was a cross-sectoral approach and the incorporation of the gender perspective as a matter of course into all United Nations activities.

The European Union welcomed the decision by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to review the outcome of international conferences in a global manner and its establishment of ad hoc task forces. It was important to avoid unnecessary duplication in the work of the task forces and it was also essential

that the global review should integrate their findings and produce clear guidelines. While it was vital to have clear guidelines at Headquarters, implementation at the field level would remain the crucial measure of the effectiveness of United Nations operational activities.

His delegation would appreciate additional information on how the United Nations system intended to coordinate its support for the development of specific anti-poverty plans and programmes through capacity-building and technical assistance. His Government believed that better use could be made of the thematic groups to encourage broad participation in discussions on poverty; the country strategy note should, where possible, be the main instrument for the elaboration of poverty eradication plans and programmes.

Interaction between directions coming from Headquarters and input from the field back into the system was an essential ingredient of an effective and integrated approach to the eradication of poverty. His delegation would have appreciated more information in that regard.

The support of the international community both at the bilateral and multilateral level was essential in helping to create an environment in which Governments could take the lead in assessing poverty situations and developing national poverty eradication strategies and programmes. The effective mobilization of financial resources for poverty eradication and a more effective orientation of development cooperation and assistance needed to be fully explored.

In recent years, the number of women living in poverty had increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in developing countries. Governments and the international community had made detailed and specific commitments to address the structural causes of poverty and the specific obstacles which militated against women. The primary responsibility for the implementation of those commitments rested at the national level. Such efforts should also involve individual women, women's groups and non-governmental organizations at all levels.

The commitments which had been undertaken and the analysis which underpinned them should form the basis of the efforts of the United Nations system to mainstream a gender perspective into the coordinated follow-up to major international conferences and into all activities relevant to the eradication of poverty. The European Union fully endorsed that approach, and

also believed in the need to provide appropriate training on gender issues to United Nations personnel in order to make them fully aware of the requirements of mainstreaming a gender perspective into poverty eradication activities.

It was important to ensure that the specific roles and mandates of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the functional commissions were clearly identified in order to avoid duplication. The role of the specialized agencies should also be taken into account. The General Assembly should provide the broad policy framework; the Council should provide guidance to the United Nations system on coordination matters and integrate the work of the functional commissions; and the functional commissions themselves should be assigned specific responsibility for monitoring implementation of commitments undertaken.

The Commission for Social Development had been designated by the General Assembly as the functional commission with the primary responsibility for follow-up to and review of the World Summit for Social Development, where issues relating to poverty eradication had been considered in depth. It was therefore important to strengthen Secretariat support for that Commission, which would also benefit from a more committed approach by Governments.

Given the increasing feminization of poverty, the Commission on the Status of Women also had a key role to play in the debate on the eradication of poverty. The European Union welcomed the fact that the programmes of work of the two Commissions made it possible for each to benefit from the views and input of the other.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social
Council

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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 19th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 1 July 1996, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES:

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

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96-80866 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (continued) (E/1996/4 and Corr.1, E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued) (E/1996/61)

Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) said that his delegation attached priority to the eradication of poverty and believed that the organizations of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional development banks should strengthen their interaction, cooperation and coordination to that end. The Council should pave the way at its current session for such enhanced coordination. Inter-institutional collaboration at the field level and in operational activities should be the starting-point for broader cooperation, for example, on policies and their social implications, on which discussions already were under way.

The discussion of resources in the report of the Secretary-General under consideration (A/1996/61) was short on recommendations for increasing the availability of resources. The voluntary character of the country strategy note (CSN) should be emphasized. The note should not be a prerequisite for system support to programmes and strategies for poverty eradication, nor should it be used as a pretext for preferential treatment for resource allocation. Further clarification was needed to determine the content and orientation of policy framework papers (PFPs) and the desirability of establishing greater complementarity between them and the country strategy notes.

The United Nations system should offer recommendations, rather than guidelines, on definitions, indicators and instruments for evaluating the impact of poverty eradication programmes. The scope of the proposed monitoring required clarification. It was for the General Assembly to adopt policy guidelines for a harmonized approach to poverty eradication on the part of the international community; the Council should implement the coordinating tasks assigned to it by the General Assembly. Similarly, the General Assembly, not

the Council, should be the primary forum for discussion of cross-cutting issues relating to poverty eradication, such as the work of the United Nations system relating to the enabling environment and the integration of the economic and social dimensions. In the context of the functional commissions, the Commission for Social Development should be assigned the leading role in poverty eradication.

Mr. AKBAR (Pakistan) said that the activities of the United Nations system for poverty eradication should be guided primarily by the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Given the dimensions and complexity of the problem of poverty, integrated international action was needed to ensure a better future for the 1.3 billion poor of the world, whose conditions were continuing to deteriorate.

His delegation appreciated the contribution of the United Nations system, within its constraints and limitations, to efforts to eradicate poverty. Matters relating to the creation of an enabling environment, the responsibility of the United Nations for enhancement of the information base on poverty and the inadequacy of available resources were interrelated and thus should be viewed as a whole. Given how crucial the availability of resources was to efforts to eradicate poverty, the subject should have been dealt with more fully and in a manner which reflected the interrelated nature of the different mandates involved. Future reports should bring together all available data on the enabling environment, the availability of resources and relevant studies carried out within the United Nations system.

Although his delegation noted with satisfaction that foreign direct investment flows to the developing countries were increasing, it believed that they were by no means a substitute for resource allocation for the developing countries, in particular, for poverty eradication. His delegation fully agreed with the Secretary-General that predictable and adequate financial resources were essential if poverty eradication was to be considered a realistic goal in the foreseeable future. Recommendation 14 in section I of the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61) required further consideration. The United Nations system should continue to work directly with Member States on the formulation of country strategy notes and policy framework papers. With regard to the recommendations in section II, particular attention should be given to

mainstreaming the gender perspective in United Nations activities for poverty eradication. With regard to section III, the Council might wish to consider the enabling environment at its next session. The areas of responsibility suggested for consideration by the functional commissions were appropriate.

His country was focusing its poverty eradication efforts by allocating more resources for human development, health, education and the well-being of the population. It was pursuing a policy to promote economic growth and improve income distribution and gave priority to agricultural development, with an emphasis on food production, in order to ensure food security.

Mr. RASHEED (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the concern of UNICEF with poverty was motivated by three basic facts. First, because of their dependency, children often were the first victims of poverty. Secondly, because poverty was most prevalent among large families, children constituted the single largest group affected by poverty. Thirdly, in view of the nearly universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, virtually all the world's children were entitled to the fundamental rights of health, education and nutrition.

UNICEF believed that universal access to basic social services was a precondition for eradicating poverty. It was important to distinguish between basic human needs and basic social services. UNICEF defined basic social services to include basic education, primary health care, including reproductive health and population programmes, nutrition and low-cost water and sanitation. Basic human needs were broader in scope and included employment, shelter and credit.

The UNICEF strategy to promote universal access to basic social services focused on direct support for service delivery, capacity-building and social mobilization and advocacy. Full participation of the poor, communities and local authorities was crucial for capacity-building and sustainability. Countries in which remarkable social progress had been achieved had demonstrated a sustained commitment to providing basic social services for children, a commitment bolstered by political will, effective strategies and efficient delivery systems. Investment in people - in particular, children - was good economics everywhere in the world, irrespective of the level of development. The time had come to translate the growing consensus on the importance of

investing in children into tangible measures to ensure adequate resource allocation and popular participation in poverty eradication.

UNICEF strongly favoured the implementation of the 20/20 initiative and noted that there was a consensus that its implementation, along with debt swaps, decentralization and community co-management, made it possible to sustain most goals in most countries, even in times of economic and fiscal austerity.

UNICEF agreed that there was no single best strategy for poverty eradication. Accordingly, the country programme for cooperation was the central document used by it to establish priorities and define strategies at the field level. It was an active partner in the formulation of the country strategy note and participated actively in various inter-agency forums to combat poverty. UNICEF strongly agreed with the Consultative Committee on Coordination and Operational Questions (CCCOQ) that joint assessments and analysis of poverty at the country level provided a solid foundation for better harmonization and integration. Its commitment to reducing the gender disparity in the achievement of global goals focused on the education of girls, the health of girls, adolescents and women and children's and women's rights.

In conclusion, he emphasized the importance of alleviating the plight of the poorest of the poor and said that a reallocation of a minute fraction of global output in favour of basic services, combined with greater efficiency and sustainability through the practice of community co-management, could finally bring about a world free of disease, ignorance and hunger.

Mr. WANG Xuexian (China) said that poverty eradication activities should be accorded priority in the follow-up to the relevant international conferences. The coordination of such activities between various organizations and at various levels should extend beyond the United Nations system to include the recipient countries, so as to ensure the fulfilment of the needs and priorities of those countries.

The lasting eradication of poverty required the elimination of its root causes through development cooperation, a favourable international economic environment, the alleviation of the debt burdens of developing countries, and the enhanced ability of those countries to improve their people's living standards. The trend to decreased official development assistance over the past twenty years threatened the goals of poverty eradication and endangered the world economy as a whole. If, however, the international community implemented

in earnest the follow-up to the recent international conferences, there was every reason to believe that poverty would be gradually eliminated.

Mr. KIWANUKA (Uganda) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Poverty was perhaps the most acute problem facing the world. It could not be overemphasized that people were at the centre of all development, and that the purpose of development was to offer people options, one of which was access to income. His delegation was gratified to note that poverty eradication had become a United Nations system-wide concern. In Africa, the continent most afflicted by poverty, the major initiatives which addressed African economic recovery, most recently the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, all emphasized that approach. It was also encouraging to note that World Bank lending, as described at the World Summit for Social Development, had targeted assistance to rural sector development, especially feeder roads. Over the past 10 years, his Government had emphasized poverty eradication policies, and its current strategy was to focus specifically on the increase of household income, basic education and the construction and maintenance of feeder roads.

In order to ensure sustainability, poverty eradication strategies required the full involvement of the poor in all stages, from formulation to implementation. At the same time, Governments must be key players. Poverty eradication strategies should be properly focused and multisectoral with a rational application of macroeconomic policies.

In the short and medium terms, the modernization and development of the agricultural sector should be a top priority because the majority of people were engaged in agricultural production. Peasant farmers should be educated in methods of soil conservation and the use of agricultural technologies to increase production. Environmentally sustainable development called for the integration of economic, social, technical and ecological dimensions. Soils must be conserved, and deforestation and land degradation controlled. However, unless people had access to affordable alternative sources of energy, deforestation was bound to continue. Policies that subsidized solar technology would go a long way towards preserving the forests.

In order to overcome the problem of food insecurity, there was a need for land reform, especially land access for women, improved farming systems, new

technologies, and better education. The development of rural infrastructure was fundamental to the eradication of rural poverty. The need for access to markets and to affordable credit, especially for disadvantaged groups like women, could not be overemphasized.

Women were the backbone of African societies. Their political and economic empowerment was therefore fundamental to the success of strategies for poverty eradication. Women must have access to resources, especially land, and must be protected by inheritance laws. Deliberate affirmative action was needed to reduce the huge imbalances that persisted. For the past 10 years, his Government had adopted affirmative action measures.

Sub-Saharan Africa still lacked a critical mass of strategic skills in practically every discipline. The situation was worse in science and technology, management and accountancy. The problem had been recognized by the Bretton Woods institutions, especially the World Bank, and other specialized agencies.

In the past, the vital link between democracy and development had often been ignored. The spread of competitive elections in Africa had expanded the frontiers of democracy as well as peace and stability, bringing a commitment to the improvement of the quality of governance, and to transparency and accountability in public administration. Continued assistance from the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to promote and strengthen democracy, good governance and civil society was fundamental.

Successful coordination policies to eradicate poverty would depend on the commitment of host Governments. They must be key players and must have a feeling of ownership and control of poverty eradication programmes. It was therefore imperative that the initiatives of the United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions should converge with national initiatives and priorities and that there should be a constant dialogue to ensure consistency and the effective delivery of programmes.

Ms. TRONE (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that women's empowerment, reproductive health and rights, and the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups were essential elements in social development and poverty eradication. Women should be active participants or architects in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty eradication programmes. Reproductive health programmes for women and adolescents should be enhanced, and

the specific needs of people living on the margins of society should also be addressed.

All programmes supported by UNFPA were ultimately addressed to the poor and designed to foster the social and economic development which led to poverty eradication. In an environment of rising demands and competing interests, it was necessary to supplement the pool of development resources from non-traditional sources, including the private sector, to collaborate more closely with non-governmental organizations, and to encourage ownership of development programmes by local communities as well as by government agencies.

Mr. SOEPRAPTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation fully supported the statement of the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The coexistence of dire poverty with enormous affluence was evidence of the failure of recent poverty eradication programmes, including those of the United Nations system. Chronic poverty required a multisectoral and holistic approach, as well as the harmonization and coordination of United Nations poverty eradication activities. In that context, the United Nations should focus on delivering technical assistance that supported national poverty eradication efforts.

His delegation requested clarification of the recommendation that the United Nations system should develop indicators for monitoring poverty programmes (E/1996/61, para. 70), since individual countries knew their own needs best and merely required technical assistance in developing their own guidelines. With regard to section I, recommendation 14, he said that cooperation at the policy level was at least as important as cooperation at the field level; field-level programmes should be fully integrated into national programmes and should not impose new conditionalities on development assistance. Moreover, as the country strategy note (CSN) was the main instrument for coordinating United Nations operational activities for development, any comprehensive review of major United Nations programmes by the field-level committee referred to in recommendation II of section I should be subject to the guidance of national Governments.

Given the importance of programme harmonization and an integrated, intergovernmental approach, a comprehensive, thematic multi-year programme of poverty eradication should be developed and established by the Council and its subsidiary organs. Moreover, the issue of declining financial resources was a

far more urgent topic for the Council's high-level and coordination segments than was that of an enabling environment.

Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) said that his delegation fully endorsed the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In approaching the item under consideration, there was a need to distinguish between intergovernmental and inter-agency coordination. The work being carried out by agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to eradicate poverty needed to be analysed at both field and headquarters levels. If the Council really wished to promote coordination, and not merely make statements about it, it needed to create an interface between the United Nations system and the intergovernmental system. The agencies, in turn, would not be able to achieve anything unless there was an interface with the intergovernmental system. ACC had a primordial role to play in promoting inter-agency coordination; however, it had no interface with the intergovernmental system. Coordination needed to be considered not just at the field level but also at the conceptual level of headquarters; only then would it be possible to talk of coordination of the activities of the system for poverty eradication.

In order to make the coordination segment of the Council more effective, the Council should consider the reports of ACC and the inter-agency task forces and determine how coordination could be carried out. The consideration of the report of ACC in the general segment was too global and needed to be related to specific items. The work done could then be reflected in the conclusions, so that in 1997 at the next coordinating session the Council could have a more focused discussion, leading to concrete activities in the field.

Mr. MARTIN (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation joined others in stressing the need to intensify a coordinated programme for poverty eradication, using the key elements which had emerged from recent United Nations international conferences. Poverty eradication was part of the commitment made by nations to implement the ideals of the Charter.

Market forces of the private sector were now clear and determinant actors. The international economic enabling environment for social development, and hence for the eradication of poverty, must take that new situation into account. The logic of competitiveness, central to the globalized market process, must be

related to the logic of solidarity, central to the process of development cooperation. In a globalized economy, transnational economic actors, large and small, were the natural protagonists. At times, large private transnational actors wielded greater economic influence than individual national Governments. Private-sector resource flows represented a major component in resource flows from developed to developing countries but went to only a very limited number of countries. It had to be asked: how far private-sector investment accorded with the government priorities and to what extent market forces could be expected to take on responsibility for responding to social needs; who had responsibility in a globalized market economy for guaranteeing rule-based behaviour in the context of an ethical and juridical framework; and who bore responsibility for outlawing certain speculative activities which were contrary to the shared common interests of the international community, including certain development priorities.

In order to ensure that global economic policy served the interests of social development and poverty eradication, the Task Force on the enabling environment needed to consider: what measures should be taken to facilitate increased private investment to the poorest countries; what measures could be proposed to ensure that economic growth and competitiveness took place in a context which respected the natural environment, labour standards and the availability of resources and ownership titles for women; what measures could be taken to increase socially productive investment by transnational actors in the countries in which they worked; and what measures could be taken to prompt the private sector to assume appropriate responsibility, alongside Governments and civil society, in the progressive realization of social and economic rights.

There was no turning back the tide of economic globalization, which could be beneficial to all nations in the long run. However, there would be short-term losers, whose needs must be addressed by international cooperation. The role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was important in that regard, as was the provision of official development assistance. There was a pronounced need for the developed countries to create a new political will in favour of solidarity.

Mr. STOBY (Director, Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that there had been some suggestion that there was inadequate treatment of the question of resources in the report of the

Secretary-General (E/1996/61). However, the issue was referred to briefly in paragraph 5 and dealt with fully in paragraphs 57 to 65. Paragraph 58 referred to the general trend of declining resource commitments to multilateral development institutions, and paragraph 60 to the need for the mobilization of substantial new and additional resources. Recommendation 2, in paragraph 67, also addressed the question of resources.

On the issue of the coordinating role of ACC, he felt that it was unfair to suggest that ACC and its task forces were concentrating excessively on operational issues. ACC reviewed the results of conferences in order to decide what needed to be done in terms of conceptual work at the global policy level and what needed to be done in terms of operational activities at the field level. In other words, ACC was intent on maintaining a balance between conceptual work at the global level and ensuring that the results of conferences were operationalized through various mechanisms, particularly the task forces, at the field level.

The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1996/SR.20
29 July 1996

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Substantive session of 1996

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 2 July 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Gervais (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Henze (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (continued)

Requests from non-governmental organizations for hearings

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council agreed to hear the organizations listed in document E/1996/78 under the agenda items indicated.

It was so decided.

Open-ended Working Group on the Review of Arrangements for Consultations with Non-Governmental Organizations

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council wished to accept the Bureau's recommendation that consultations on the review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations should continue.

It was so decided.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: (continued) (E/1996/4 and Corr.1, E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued) (E/1996/61)

Ms. AWORI (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that UNDP was pursuing a broad, multisectoral development agenda aimed at poverty eradication, with employment and sustainable livelihoods, gender equality, environmental sustainability and improved governance as major goals and programming areas. A strong country presence placed an important responsibility on UNDP to support national capacities and promote a frank and open dialogue on development issues with national Governments and all country partners and other agencies in the United Nations system.

Most UNDP country programmes had been reoriented towards poverty eradication. That emphasis was likely to increase further during the next programming cycle as a result of changes in programming arrangements. In Africa, UNDP was working on a five-year programme of employment generation for poverty reduction in conjunction with the International Labour Organization

(ILO). In Asia, UNDP was helping the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to implement a social mobilization strategy aimed at strengthening village organizations and training community leaders in methodologies for income generation and infrastructure development projects.

During the current year, the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, UNDP had launched its Poverty Strategies Initiative to support country efforts to implement the Copenhagen agreements, especially with regard to the formulation of national poverty eradication strategies and action plans.

UNDP believed that, if fully implemented, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report concerning the improvement of coordinated United Nations support at the country level would enable the United Nations system to make a breakthrough in the increasing problem of the feminization of poverty.

National policy, while critical, was not sufficient to ensure poverty reduction and greater equity in developing countries. The increasing disparities and instability of the international economic system offered bleak development prospects to the least developed countries, making it very difficult for them to marshal the necessary resources for poverty reduction. New ways must be found of harnessing the immense potential of new technologies in an increasingly globalized world in such a way as to ensure that they would contribute to social cohesion, integration and greater prosperity for all.

A related concern was finding ways for countries to move beyond structural adjustment towards policies that promoted growth and reduced poverty. External debt continued to impose a heavy drain on government resources which would otherwise be channelled into human development priorities. Current policy prescriptions needed to be reviewed in order to ensure that strong foundations for economic growth were established and that concern for the poor ranked at the top of the policy agenda.

While sustained poverty reduction could not be accomplished without a permanent boosting of people's earning capacity, it would be unwise to rely on market forces alone for the creation of jobs. Innovative strategies must be devised to support poor people in their quest for a sustainable livelihood.

The international community must work together to strengthen institutional capacity in developing countries for the design and implementation of more equitable poverty-reduction policies and programmes. There was a compelling need to reconsider economic reform programmes.

Since national policies would not suffice, the intergovernmental machinery of the United Nations must elaborate a new global framework that would support greater access by the poorer countries to the potential benefits of economic globalization. To that end better coordination of policies and programmes among all development organizations was required, in addition to new financial resources.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Russian Federation) said that the problem of poverty was complex and many-faceted; it therefore necessitated a multisectoral approach. His delegation welcomed the assistance provided by the United Nations development system in the implementation of national plans and programmes to eradicate poverty. He also welcomed the harmonization of efforts designed to incorporate tne gender perspective into poverty eradication programmes and endorsed effective oversight of the results of the coordinated programmes of the various functional commissions.

The lack of resources currently affecting development activities, coordination at country level and cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, the elimination of programme duplication and the harmonization of the work of the functional commissions were areas of particular interest and concern to his Government. Development funding should be continuous and predictable. The international community should mobilize additional financial resources adequate to the magnitude of the task. UNDP had a particularly valuable role to play in poverty alleviation programmes.

The international community could hasten the global process of democratic transformations by being more active in its support for countries with transitional economies. Greater attention by organizations in the United Nations system to the social problems of such countries and their integration into the world economy would be more in keeping with current realities. Russia supported continued efforts to galvanize the Economic and Social Council's activity, for example by strengthening its secretariat, thereby enabling the Council to coordinate the reaction of the United Nations system to the recommendations of international conferences and summits in a more effective manner.

Mr. WILMOT (Ghana) said that poverty eradication should be an essential element of all economic and social programmes of the United Nations system. His delegation noted that a number of measures had been put in place to

assist in the eradication of poverty, for example coordinated and integrated support for country-level action, the resident coordinator system, and the programmes of the functional commissions.

His delegation called for the strengthening of the resident coordinator system to enable it to better integrate the various forms of assistance offered at country level for the eradication of poverty. He also endorsed the observations concerning the need to: harmonize and coordinate the variety of mandates and activities of the United Nations system in the field of poverty eradication (para. 8), enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations system at the country level in pursuance of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, strengthen the role of country strategy notes, and implement pragmatic country-specific integrated approaches. The United Nations system should be an advocate for and answerable to the poor.

It was regrettable that despite the strong interest and effort of the United Nations system in poverty eradication, the level of financial resources continued to decline, making it difficult for multilateral development institutions to effectively confront the challenges of eradicating poverty. The targets and objectives on poverty eradication agreed at recent major international conferences could not be achieved unless adequate resource flows for the various programmes were provided on a predictable and assured basis. There was an urgent need to mobilize substantial new and additional resources.

His Government noted with satisfaction the serious consideration being given to the gender dimension in the effort to eradicate poverty. The United Nations system should include the Bretton Woods institutions in all efforts to promote an active policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all poverty eradication policies and programmes. He also wished to stress the importance of developing new strategies to prevent the inadvertent marginalization of women as distinct from mainstreaming the gender dimension.

Since the subject of poverty eradication cut across the priorities of recent major United Nations conferences, it was necessary to evolve a coherent set of policy guidelines for the United Nations system and the international community through a properly structured intergovernmental dialogue.

His delegation endorsed the proposals to coordinate the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions and called for the systematic sharing of tasks among those commissions. In particular, Ghana was in favour of

maintaining a clear division of labour in which the General Assembly would address policy issues, the Economic and Social Council would oversee and coordinate the work of the functional commissions, and the commissions themselves would receive clear and specific mandates within well-defined areas of responsibility.

The Council was the primary intergovernmental forum for discussing poverty eradication from an integrated perspective. As such it should conduct regular in-depth reviews of various aspects of the subject of poverty eradication, culminating in an overall review of the theme in the year 2000 to coincide with the review of the goals of the World Summit for Social Development.

Ms. DOWDESWELL (United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) said that improved coordination for poverty eradication had acquired greater urgency in the context of declining resources. With poverty and the environment moving to the centre of the development agenda, the concept of development itself should be redefined, on the basis of self-generated growth and sustainability. At the same time, economic analysts should move away from the market-based approach, to take account of the constraints of natural and human capital, and the social and ecological externalities of traditional development policies.

UNEP believed that new development strategies should, inter alia, involve the poor in decision-making, ensure that commodity prices fully reflected production costs, support appropriate technologies, improve natural resource accounting, encourage community participation, recognize traditional land rights, encourage land reforms and strengthen the development work of international institutions.

In its own environmental work, UNEP had devised integrated programmes which sought to promote sustainable global production and consumption patterns in partnership with organizations and institutions at all levels. It had also helped to develop guidelines for sustainable use and management of freshwater and coastal resources, with its recommendations for equity based water management having been included in the Special Initiative on Africa. Focusing on the social aspects of drylands management, the Programme had sought to provide more effective assistance to the marginalized populations most seriously affected by desertification. Finally, it was working on sustainable development at the urban level, seeking to provide a framework for local involvement in protection of the ecosystem.

In developing and implementing those initiatives, and in incorporating gender considerations into its environmental policy guidelines, UNEP had worked on the basis of cooperation with the relevant United Nations agencies. Their constant aim was to contribute to the work of the United Nations by responding to the development challenges of the future.

Mr. N'DOW (Secretary-General of the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)) said that the concept of poverty eradication through partnership with all relevant groups had been given fresh impetus at the recent Habitat Conference. The Conference had shown that the issue of poverty eradication could not be divorced from that of shelter, and that partners at all levels, including women, non-governmental organizations, private sector and United Nations agencies, must work together to meet the challenges of the new urban world.

It had also demonstrated the wisdom of including partners from civil society in the discussion of environmental matters, both at the Conference itself and at the follow-up stage. The secretariat looked forward to receiving the support of the United Nations and of all its partners, so that the hopes raised at the Conference could be translated into action on shelter for the benefit of the global community.

Ms. HAGEN (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that ILO worked closely with international financial institutions and the United Nations system to promote poverty eradication through employment and appropriate economic and social policies. For that reason, the organization supported the statement by the Group of 77 and China at an earlier meeting concerning the need for better employment and growth-oriented economic policies as a complement to direct poverty alleviation programmes.

With regard to the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61), she said that the recommendations in paragraphs 66 to 79 were an important beginning. Realizing that the United Nations system should concentrate on maximizing the quality of its assistance to Governments, ILO was concentrating on country-based employment reviews, both in its activities to follow up on the recent major United Nations conferences and in the inter-agency task force on employment and sustainable livelihoods. The task force hoped to develop innovative approaches to the problems of poverty and employment, while improving coordination of work between agencies in the field and headquarters.

In the light of the lessons learned at recent major conferences, the recommendations for improved cooperation on poverty should have referred to assistance for capacity-building and the participation of civil society in economic reform. Respect for human rights should also be considered a vital part of United Nations poverty eradication measures, while the gender perspective should be fully integrated into all programmes and activities. The report could also have given more attention to the work carried out by other parts of the United Nations system.

If everything went according to plan the task force on employment and sustained livelihoods would present a report on selected country reviews by the end of the first quarter of 1997. However, that time-frame did raise questions as to the feasibility of implementing the recommendation in paragraph 173 of the report, concerning the placing of productive employment and sustainable livelihoods on the agenda of the Commission for Social Development in 1997.

Convinced that full employment provided a foundation for the eradication of poverty, ILO remained committed to cooperate with all its partners to ensure the success of poverty eradication policies.

Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) said that the discussion of poverty was taking place in the midst of efforts to initiate broad reforms in the United Nations system. Poverty, as a multidimensional issue, was addressed in almost all United Nations programmes and activities; therefore, good coordination in that sector was key, since it would have a ripple effect throughout the system. For its part, Canada placed poverty firmly within the core of its foreign and development assistance policies. It believed that new ways were needed to address the socio-cultural, structural and historical factors that perpetuated poverty; that meant breaking down artificial divisions between social programme sectors and actively integrating the social and economic dimensions.

The first challenge for the international community was to work in partnership with developing countries to provide technical assistance in their efforts to elaborate poverty reduction strategies which corresponded to their specific situations. The second stage was to help provide basic social services and other forms of assistance to people living in poverty, through such structures as the 20/20 initiative. For its part, Canada already allocated 25 per cent of its bilateral official development assistance to meeting basic human needs.

The emphasis on programme approaches conceived, designed, managed and monitored under the leadership of recipient Governments was appropriate, but it was surprising that the report of the Secretary-General had downplayed the importance of UNDP round-table meetings and World Bank consultative group arrangements, which had an important role to play by including the broadest possible range of donors. Getting all the pertinent actors together with a recipient country was key to ensuring minimal overlap of effort and maximum resource mobilization.

Canada strongly supported the newly created inter-agency task forces on respectively, the enabling environment for social and economic development, employment and sustainable livelihoods and basic social services for all, but found their focus on indicators, monitoring progress and gathering best practices disappointing. It would support a stronger coordination role in support of country-level implementation mechanisms and intergovernmental machinery. In terms of financing, domestic savings and budgetary allocations, including reduced military spending, should be recognized as an important funding source for poverty strategies. His delegation had some reservations regarding the recommendations on securing predictable, continuous and assured funding. The hard-won consensus reached in the context of the negotiations on General Assembly resolution 50/227 should guide efforts in the poverty sector.

Only through deliberate and systematic attention to gender issues could programmes begin to address the issues of poverty. The role of the Commission on the Status of Women as a catalyst in promoting the integration of gender perspective in policies and programmes system-wide was especially important. A gender perspective should also be integrated in country strategy notes, given their importance to the orientation of United Nations activities in a particular country.

Canada agreed that the Council should assume the role as the primary intergovernmental forum for integrated treatment of poverty eradication. The Commission on Social Development should support the Council's function with special emphasis on national poverty eradication strategies and international actions to support them. The other commissions should focus on the linkages between poverty and their sectors of interest. Their work should culminate in a consideration of poverty by the Council in 1999, which would set the stage for the review of the implementation of Social Summit outcomes.

Turning to specific comments on the Secretary-General's report, first, the recommendations on country-level and intergovernmental coordination appeared to be artificially separated. Since most of the actual implementation would take place at the country level, an obvious way to provide linkages would be through the three task forces. With regard to the proposal that the Commission on Social Development should be the clearing-house for information from the other functional commissions, it was not clear whether that Commission was strong enough, as yet, to take on that ambitious function. Further efforts should be made to enhance the Commission, with a stronger policy coordination role reserved for the Council. The issue of harmonization of work programmes could remain on the Council's agenda for the time being. With regard to financing, the financing provisions of each of the global conferences were similar, and the potential for overlap was great. Therefore, the Council should have a role in that sector. The report suggested a role for the Statistical Commission in the elaboration of indicators and other statistical tools for measuring poverty. However, a collaborative effort under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination would take into account related initiatives and help to avoid overlap. Finally, the Council should not be overly prescriptive about the roles of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Commission on Human Settlements.

Mr. ABDELLAH (Tunisia) recalled that the eradication of poverty had been a priority goal of all the major United Nations conferences held since 1990. The breadth, complexity and multisectoral nature of that problem required the efforts of all members of society. By harmonizing work programmes on poverty eradication, the United Nations family would ensure the required coherence in policy at the field level needed to address the problem.

Tunisia welcomed the excellent coordination at the country level, whether through the resident coordinator, the country strategy note or local coordinating committees. All the various actors in the process - donors, non-governmental organizations and representatives of civil society, including the most disadvantaged groups - must cooperate in translating the broad objectives into a series of specific goals with firm time-frames.

In Tunisia, the Fund for National Solidarity had been established in 1992 to finance national projects for low-income groups and to assist in the development of basic community infrastructure. Localities eligible for such

projects were either poor, inaccessible or lacking basic facilities, such as drinking water supply, schools or electricity. The projects had greatly improved the standard of living of the target populations.

Although the international community was unanimous in stating that poverty eradication was a priority for the 1990s, contributions to multilateral development institutions had continued to decline. If that trend continued, all efforts would be doomed to failure. The experience of many countries over the past two decades had amply demonstrated that social progress was much more than a simple play of market forces. The priority objectives of ensuring the social protection of the individual and his integration into society would not be achieved without the political will to make an investment at the national level, but also internationally, in the welfare of all.

Ms. DURRANT (Jamaica), while acknowledging the primary responsibility of Governments for defining and implementing poverty eradication strategies, said that the United Nations role was also critical. The United Nations system must continue to provide policy advice in the broadest sense, enhanced data and information bases and support at the national level, development and provision of basic social services and other concrete initiatives which would directly affect the poor. The inter-agency task forces were an appropriate response to the global conferences, and had already accomplished much towards the implementation of conference goals.

While her delegation supported the recommendations for a substantial increase in funding, it was concerned at the implications of the proposal that consideration should be given to setting aside a certain proportion of resources for joint poverty eradication initiatives out of existing allocations for multilateral institutions, rather than finding new and additional resources for poverty eradication. Since national and international environment merited equal attention, the area covered by the task force on the enabling environment should be broadened to include trade liberalization, investment and private capital flows and transfer of technology.

With regard to the gender dimension of poverty, greater coherence was needed in information collection, research and analysis, as well as the production of gender-disaggregated data for use in setting policies for addressing the feminization of poverty. Her delegation supported the recommendation contained in paragraph 98 of the Secretary-General's report.

Harmonization and coordination, particularly at the country level, were critical to the successful implementation of poverty eradication strategies. While it was desirable for the eradication of poverty to remain a cross-cutting priority, a coherent set of policy guidelines to avoid overlap and duplication were essential. More attention could have been paid in the report to the role of civil society in programme development. Non-governmental organizations and community groups, which where often closest to the stark reality of poverty, must be partners in the process. Finally, there appeared to be no systematic sharing of tasks among the functional commissions, and a clearer division of labour was needed.

Mr. HOLTHE (Observer for Norway) said that the 1990s had produced a growing global consensus that human beings must be at the centre of development efforts. There was therefore need for a significant increase in the resources allocated to basic social services and for the utilization of those resources in a more effective and focused way. The tools which had been developed to improve coordination of United Nations poverty eradication activities at the field level, including the resident coordinator system, the country strategy note, field-level committees, thematic working groups, the programme approach and round-table meetings and consultative group arrangements, should be fully implemented.

In that connection, the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa, which emphasized the need for better coordination between the Bretton Woods institutions, United Nations agencies and bilateral donors in order to reinforce the overall effect of development assistance, was a new and positive development. While the extent to which new and additional resources could be mobilized was still unclear, if implemented the Special Initiative would greatly improve the quality of utilization of overall resources. It would be useful, however, to clarify a number of points regarding the implementation of the Special Initiative, including the degree of cooperation with African authorities, the use of existing mechanisms, financial issues, and the degree of affiliation with the various United Nations agencies.

Together with the Government of the Netherlands, Norway had convened an international meeting in Oslo the previous April to contribute to the formulation of a global strategy for poverty eradication, in keeping with the concrete strategy and partnership called for by the Group of Seven.

Norway fully supported the Secretary-General's call for practical steps to mainstream the gender perspective into all poverty eradication activities and welcomed the establishment of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women to address the cross-cutting nature of gender issues. It was important to have an integrated follow-up of the global conferences so that cross-cutting issues such as gender and poverty eradication could be effectively addressed. Investing in women and children was the most effective way of dealing with poverty eradication. Indeed, poverty eradication programmes which did not fully integrate the gender perspective would fail to achieve their objectives.

He drew attention to the paradox between the wide recognition that poverty eradication was a priority concern and the recent trend towards declining multilateral development assistance. Adequate and predictable resource flows were essential if poverty eradication was to become a realistic goal in the foreseeable future. A reformed and thus strengthened United Nations system could contribute significantly to that end.

Mr. WEIBGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that poverty and food insecurity would be the biggest single challenge for developing countries in the twenty-first century and strategies to address that challenge must target the rural areas of those countries, where most of the world's 1.3 billion poor lived.

A cruel irony of poverty was that while most poor people lived and worked in rural areas where food should be produced, they lacked adequate land and water resources to produce enough food for their families; they also lacked employment opportunities and so could not generate enough cash income to purchase food. Improved technologies to increase production and productivity were often not available to the poor because of their high cost.

In their struggle for survival, the rural poor often resorted to practices that were harmful to the environment, thereby further jeopardizing both their own food security and that of future generations. Land shortages drove rural people to cultivate steep slopes or land that was more suitable for pastures or forests. Such practices led to reduced production and were major factors in dry land degradation resulting in desertification, especially in Africa.

Rural poverty was also inextricably linked to urban poverty since the rural poor tended to migrate to urban areas. Most developing countries were unable to cope with such migration and the resulting social dislocation, political

instability and crime. It was therefore important that scarce resources should be targeted to the root causes rather than the consequences of urban poverty.

In response to that challenge, FAO had been undertaking vigorous policy advisory and technical assistance programmes, often in close collaboration with other United Nations agencies, in support of the efforts of member States to increase food production and create rural employment, particularly in low-income, food-deficit countries. In November 1996, for example, it would convene the World Food Summit in Rome to underscore the need for low-income, food-deficit countries to consider food security and agricultural development as the first step towards the achievement of economic growth, political stability and poverty reduction.

Preparation for the World Food Summit had provided many opportunities for collaboration and coordination within the United Nations system. In addition, FAO collaborated closely with United Nations agencies, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Bank and UNEP, in implementing the International Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. It also participated in the inter-agency task forces set up to coordinate the follow-up to the current series of global conferences.

Mr. ELMIGER (Observer for Switzerland) said that his Government welcomed the efforts being made to strengthen coordination between the United Nations and other multilateral, governmental and non-governmental bodies and to establish strategic priorities for poverty eradication programmes. Certain aspects of poverty were particularly disturbing, notably the feminization of the phenomenon, which was linked to socio-cultural legacies and to the structural adjustment of economies. Female poverty adversely affected the development of the family and society, gave rise to the evil of child labour, and created imbalances in the labour market. Switzerland therefore supported all the measures that had been proposed at the national and international levels to integrate the gender equality dimension into poverty eradication programmes in order to permit women to participate in decision-making in all areas of concern to them.

Economic and social development were two sides of the same coin and it was impossible in the current constantly evolving economic and social environment to pursue an effective poverty eradication policy at either the national or international level which did not take into account the various dimensions of

human development. The international community should therefore establish social, technical and economic poverty assessment criteria in order to ensure that multilateral assistance was more effectively targeted. In that regard, country strategy notes were an effective instrument for disseminating data on poverty to all concerned actors within the United Nations system and helping design programmes geared to the specific needs of individual countries.

With regard to the division of labour among the various actors concerned with poverty eradication, all members of United Nations specialized agencies should be able to participate fully in the work of the functional commissions, which should each have a clearly defined area of competence and a detailed programme of work. Switzerland supported the proposals made and the decisions taken in that regard.

Finally, in order to eradicate poverty, it was absolutely essential to create the conditions for job-creating economic growth. In that connection, the positive effects of the opening up of markets and liberalization of trade could be achieved only by strengthening multilateral dialogue, particularly between the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions. Furthermore, global efforts to eradicate poverty could succeed only if the social dimension of the liberalization of international trade were taken fully into account.

Mr. MWAKAWAGO (United Republic of Tanzania), recalling the commitment made by Governments at the World Summit for Social Development, to formulate national poverty eradication policies and strategies in partnership with civil society, said that his Government had adopted various economic, social and political measures aimed at eradicating poverty. In collaboration with the World Bank, it was preparing a country memorandum on poverty alleviation to analyse the socio-economic situation and suggest policy measures designed to achieve sustained economic growth. A Poverty Eradication Division had also been established to coordinate the efforts of the different actors involved in poverty eradication in the country. In addition, the Government was formulating a national policy on poverty eradication, which would be ready for implementation by the end of 1996.

For those measures to be effective, however, massive resources, both national and international, must be mobilized. The international community was called upon to provide a substantial and predictable flow of grant money and

soft loans. In particular, donor countries, development agencies and multilateral banks must review their grant and lending programmes with a view to increasing the share of resources devoted to human development. He appealed to other countries to emulate the example of the Nordic States and the Netherlands, which had fulfilled the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance.

Poverty eradication measures, however, could not be effective without the involvement of women. He was proud to say that Tanzanian women occupied key positions in both the public and private sectors and participated in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes at all levels. While they had not achieved optimum development, they were moving in the right direction.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1996/SR.21
30 July 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1996

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 2 July 1996, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued)

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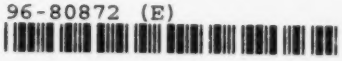
96-80872 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (continued) (E/1996/4 and Corr.1, E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued) (E/1996/61)

Mr. MOODY (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that IFAD viewed the rural poor as potential contributors rather than as a burden to national economies. Given the proper tools, public infrastructure and access to credit and training, the productive capacities of the poor could be harnessed.

Over 1 billion urban and rural poor currently suffered from malnutrition and were forced to survive on the equivalent of less than one dollar per day, and by the year 2025 that figure might well double. Despite foreseeable advances in agricultural science and technology, the collective demand for food would be in excess of even the most optimistic food supply projections. Accordingly, a highly coordinated strategy was needed to avert widespread food deprivation and overuse of fragile land, water and forest resources. Improving access to food was also crucial to alleviating hunger and poverty in rural areas, and IFAD recognized that increased total food supply must be combined with local improvements in public infrastructure, storage facilities and marketing opportunities.

Given the direct link between poverty and environmental degradation, IFAD designed projects which incorporated conservation-based sustainable agriculture in order to assist the rural poor to protect their precious natural resources. It had incorporated the goals of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in its work, was assisting countries to implement the International Convention on Desertification and was collaborating with other United Nations agencies and programmes to attack poverty and preserve the environment simultaneously.

The provision of financial services to small farmers, rural women and village artisans was a very effective tool used by IFAD to increase self-reliance, economic well-being and nutritional standards. Access to credit to acquire tangible productive assets was crucial to development in local economies with a labour surplus. IFAD was continuously fine-tuning its micro-financing schemes to develop innovative ways of providing financial services tailored to diverse societies and cultures. Through a new model for world banking, even poor rural communities had access to a comprehensive range of financial services. Furthermore, IFAD, along with the World Bank and several bilateral donors, had joined a consultative group on assisting the poorest and was working to replicate micro-financing programmes as widely as possible.

Partnership with non-governmental organizations was essential to the on-the-ground success of IFAD projects, especially in remote rural areas. IFAD cooperated with non-governmental organizations that used sustainable indigenous methods and locally based innovative technologies which could be reproduced on a larger scale. Non-governmental organizations also had a special capacity to form and maintain community groups which involved the beneficiaries in the design and implementation of projects. By providing cost-effective availability of credit, training, access to low-cost technologies and basic local infrastructure, IFAD was assisting small farmers, rural women and the landless to overcome the constraints of poverty and hunger.

Mr. JELE (South Africa) said that his delegation endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Turning to paragraph 66 of document E/1996/61, which stressed that it was the primary responsibility of the Government of each country to define its own poverty eradication strategy, he said that his Government fully concurred with that view and had already put in place a comprehensive programme for poverty reduction. Through a special reconstruction and development fund, substantial resources had been allocated to socio-economic priority needs. Other funds had been diverted from consumption to capital expenditure, especially in the areas of housing, transport and water supply. Projects included providing a daily meal to 5 million children and free health services for children up to six years of age and pregnant women.

In keeping with the recommendation in paragraph 72, his Government, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had nearly

completed its country strategy note, which constituted the overall framework of its cooperation with the United Nations system and the donor community. Resources from multilateral sources and donors had been integrated into the budget process to improve the effectiveness of the poverty eradication initiatives.

While welcoming the resident coordinator system and the establishment of thematic working groups and of a consultative framework between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions at the field level, his delegation hoped that such assistance would not be accompanied by new conditionalities. His Government endorsed the view that the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions should promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of economic policies and of all programmes aimed at poverty eradication.

One of the most meaningful ways in which the international community, and the multilateral financial institutions in particular, could contribute to the eradication of poverty in Africa was by effectively addressing the onerous debt burden. As long as the scarce financial resources available to the least developed countries were tied to servicing their debt, those countries would be unable to devote substantial amounts of resources to development. Close collaboration between the United Nations development system and the multilateral financial institutions was needed, and his delegation fully endorsed the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa.

Unless efforts to achieve poverty eradication were actively supported by the international community and underpinned by a substantial, predictable and continuous flow of resources, they were bound to fail. Any successful poverty eradication strategy must also be based on sustainable, balanced and human-centred development.

His delegation supported the call for greater coordination of poverty eradication activities at the field level, at United Nations Headquarters and throughout the United Nations system. The strengthening of coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions would enhance the leading role of those institutions in economic policy and decision-making, thereby increasing the capacity to eradicate poverty at a global level.

Ms. WILLIAMS-MANIGAULT (United States of America), referring to section I of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1996/61), said that her

delegation fully supported the premise that countries were responsible for formulating their own strategies for sustainable development and that the United Nations system must align its assistance with sustainable development objectives defined in documents such as the country strategy note (CSN). She referred to recommendation 8 (para. 73) in that connection. While her delegation concurred with recommendation 2 (para. 67), it believed that ensuring the effective use of resources was as important as the amount of resources provided.

Consideration should be given to incorporating the tasks described in recommendation 4 (para. 69) in the drafting of the country strategy note. That recommendation and recommendation 5 (para. 70) could have significant financial implications if they triggered a new series of reports and/or new activities. The Secretariat should indicate what savings or reductions would have to be made to accommodate the two recommendations. Her delegation had been under the impression that the United Nations system was already engaged in promoting the gender analysis referred to in recommendation 6 (para. 71) and wished to know where perceived deficiencies in the system were and what changes, if any, were envisaged.

Turning to section II of the report, she recalled that recent world conferences had concluded that investments in improving the health and education of women and their economic and political access yielded the highest return to society. The United Nations could play a key role in helping to eradicate poverty by focusing on mainstreaming a gender perspective, coordinating efforts and monitoring progress. Her delegation therefore supported recommendation 1 (para. 97). It also endorsed recommendation 2 (para. 98), since a participatory approach was essential to mainstreaming a gender perspective, which inevitably involved increasing women's participation in decision-making at all levels. Her delegation also agreed that the Council should ensure that its future monitoring activities on poverty eradication reflected a gender perspective (recommendation 4, para. 100).

With regard to section III of the report, her delegation was concerned that the recommendation in paragraph 135 invited the Commission for Social Development to play a part which both encroached on the Council's responsibilities and overstated the Commission's ability to coordinate inputs from other commissions. The Council must maintain its intended role under the Charter of the United Nations as the central policy body for matters within its

areas of responsibility. Accordingly, rather than expand the Commission for Social Development and its role in poverty eradication, the Council should define its mandate more narrowly. For the very reason that the Commission did not have expertise in poverty eradication, its meetings on that subject had been very general and of little practical use, tending to focus on renegotiating issues already negotiated in other forums.

The Commission for Social Development could perform a useful role in follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development by serving as a forum for promoting the formulation and use of national poverty alleviation plans or strategies and for exchanging experience on their implementation. Biennial sessions of the Commission could provide an occasion for discussion of national plans and actions in addressing the specific theme of the session as it related to the eradication of poverty. The General Assembly policy framework should be expanded to include: relevant specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization; various funds and programmes, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); and the inter-agency task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. They played important roles in poverty alleviation and should report directly to the Council; their work should not be duplicated by other commissions. The review by the Council of the functional and regional commissions should be completed before any decision was taken regarding the proposed expansion of the role of the Commission for Social Development.

Dr. MAAZA BEKELE (World Health Organization) said that poverty was the major underlying cause of death, disease and suffering worldwide and that its root causes, and not only its symptoms, must be addressed. It was essential to return to the basic values of primary health care and to reverse the decline in levels of financial assistance. The United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa was an important step in that direction. The poor must be perceived as partners in their own development, not as passive recipients of aid.

The World Health Organization (WHO) had identified approaches and strategies to optimize its efforts to eradicate poverty. The first approach recognized the need to target the poorest of the poor, taking into account geographical and seasonal variations in planning and resource allocation at the national and local levels. Secondly, it was essential to ensure that related

sectors incorporated health objectives in their programmes. Thirdly, external aid should be planned and programmed to complement national efforts.

One strategy required for the effective application of those approaches at the country level called for addressing major economic and social equity gaps through an assessment of the impact of various sectors on health. Secondly, it was important to encourage closer collaboration among public, private and non-governmental health care providers, which required that the role of government as the coordinator of development activities must be respected and strengthened. Thirdly, the capacity of women and of the poorest population groups to care for their health and that of their families should be reinforced. Fourthly, countries should receive support in reviewing their health and nutrition situations and developing people-focused national nutrition plans and policies in order to produce stronger populations, increase cognitive skills and decrease child mortality. A fifth strategy called for a high-level commitment to health as a national development priority, and a sixth, for a more cost-effective approach to improving the health of the poor, focusing on disease prevention. Lastly, a bottom-up approach should be promoted; the decentralization of decision-making was more effective than attempts to introduce sector-wide changes from the top.

Because health was a broad intersectoral concern, WHO worked at the country level in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNFPA and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The programme approach should be the starting point for joint government and external-aid planning and programming of intersectoral action. A common system-wide approach to health and its relationship to poverty was needed, and the current fragmentation of financing and technical cooperation, in particular in the least developed countries, must be reduced. WHO was an active participant in the common framework agreed upon to implement the plans of action of recent major international conferences.

Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana) said that his Government considered poverty to be the most formidable challenge to peace and development. It was waging a relentless campaign against poverty in Guyana, which affected approximately 40 per cent of the population. A national development strategy would soon be finalized to provide the framework for an action plan for poverty alleviation. His country fully subscribed to the 20/20 initiative and, despite its limited

resources, was devoting an increasing percentage of its annual budget to social services.

However, its efforts were severely constrained by an onerous debt overhang and by the negative effects of structural adjustment, whose impact on the social infrastructure had been particularly severe. His Government therefore was understandably anxious for the United Nations system to devise a common understanding of its problems, in particular, of the relationship between debt and poverty, between structural adjustment and poverty and between drugs and poverty.

The process of structural reform and economic liberalization had caused a deterioration of the social situation in many countries, particularly in Africa. The phenomenon of global poverty should provide a stimulus for a more coherent and coordinated response by the United Nations system.

Apart from the reservations expressed on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, most of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on poverty eradication (E/1996/61) could be accepted. He commended the Department of Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and all other bodies which were persevering in their service to development, including the regional economic commissions. His delegation recognized the particular importance of UNDP and welcomed the poverty strategies initiative it had recently introduced.

His delegation attached importance to the role of the resident coordinator, the field-level committee and the country strategy note. However, while direct country programmes provided useful support to the poor during the implementation of economic reforms, they alone could not promote economic recovery and growth and must be accompanied by national and international policies which encouraged the creation of an environment propitious to development.

Since poverty represented a major threat to international peace and stability, machinery must be established for closer coordination between the Council and the Security Council, with due respect for their separate mandates, including the possibility of joint meetings under Article 65 of the Charter. A closer working relationship between the Presidents of the two bodies and the President of the General Assembly was also needed, and the Council could make arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations under Article 71 of the Charter.

The dwindling resources allocated to development were a result of the perception planted in the public's mind that development was a wasted effort. Governments, the multilateral financial institutions and the United Nations system needed to do more to rally support for narrowing the dangerous gap which existed between the developed and the developing countries. It had become imperative and urgent for all concerned to make public advocacy and mobilization of resources an integral part of their work. During the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, there must be a concerted attack on poverty, and time-bound goals and targets must be set.

Ms. KOZIY (Observer for Ukraine) said that her delegation welcomed the proposals and recommendations made in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1996/61). It was extremely important that the international community had been able to achieve consensus on the problem of poverty eradication and had made commitments to eliminate poverty, most recently in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. The participation of Governments, specialized bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and civil society in resolving the problems of poverty must now be expanded. Poverty eradication was a complex and multifaceted problem with both national and international causes. To eliminate it, comprehensive long-term measures were needed.

The main responsibility for formulating and implementing strategies and programmes for poverty eradication lay with national Governments. They must have the political will to combat poverty, improve living conditions and meet peoples' basic needs. Increased international cooperation and support from international organizations and agencies were needed to assist countries in their efforts.

Country programmes, in which resident coordinators played a vital role, were particularly important. The successful work of UNICEF, UNDP and a number of other United Nations bodies demonstrated the effectiveness of programmes based on the country approach. The coordination of measures to combat poverty was one of the primary tasks of the United Nations system in the context of its overall developme... work.

There was a need to rationalize the work of individual bodies, organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, enhance their effectiveness, eliminate of duplication, and concentrate on priority

areas. It was advisable to hold joint meetings and consultations within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in order to coordinate plans and programmes of activity and budgets. The task forces established by ACC should inform the Commission for Social Development and also the Council of the progress made in their work.

Her delegation supported the work of the International Labour Organization in implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action in the area of employment. It also supported the efforts of other organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations, including UNESCO. The elimination of poverty was a prerequisite for stable development. Her delegation shared the view that broad-based and steady economic growth in the context of stable development was necessary to ensure social development and social justice.

Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh) said that isolated enclaves of prosperity could not coexist for long with ever-enlarging areas of deprivation. The highest priority must be accorded to poverty reduction, which should be the ultimate goal of all development strategies. The quest for social justice and equity for the poor and the deprived remained as elusive as ever; yet the problems of poverty travelled beyond the poor themselves and the societies in which they lived.

Political leaders should make a full commitment to poverty alleviation; the problem of poverty had to be attacked frontally rather than accepted as an inescapable fact of life. The commitment had to come from a sense of compassion for the weak and disadvantaged; an appreciation of the ability of the poor to contribute to material production and growth; acceptance of a new value system of sharing and caring; and recognition of the constitutional right of the poor and disadvantaged to the fulfilment of their basic needs.

The eradication of poverty had been a priority goal in all major United Nations conferences since 1990; however, no quantifiable goals or specific monitoring mechanisms for the mobilization of resources had been established. His delegation therefore looked forward to adopting a time-bound action plan in regard to the implementation of the recommendation in paragraph 67 of the report (E/1996/61).

His delegation attached particular importance to the role of the resident coordinator system and the field-level committees. Country strategy notes should be country-driven, and national authorities should decide on the overall

strategies. There could be no direct or indirect conditionalities or restrictions on programme lending, which should be programme-specific and spontaneous. His delegation supported the programme-approach planning framework and the current practice of donor/government consultative mechanisms. The activities of organizations of the United Nations system should be coordinated so as to ensure that their efforts were complementary. Coordination between the relevant organizations and the recipient countries was equally important; his delegation supported paragraph 54 of the report in that respect.

It had to be recognized that: poverty was a country-specific problem with its origin in international and regional domains; the formulation of development strategies should be the primary responsibility of the Government; development and social progress remained the only real foundation of a stable and secure world for everyone; poverty reduction must be addressed in its totality, and not piecemeal; the growth-led model of development must accommodate a people-centred growth in which the pattern of growth was as important as its rate; a key catalyst was recognition that the poor were competitive and efficient; and development must embrace a system of values reflecting a moral and spiritual outlook above and beyond profit maximization.

New measures must be adopted to eliminate the stranglehold of the debt burden, particularly for the least developed countries. The skewed impact of structural adjustment measures on the weakest segments of society must be reduced. Coordination and coherence must be enhanced between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system to allow for greater accountability and transparency in line with United Nations economic and social policies.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1996/SR.22
1 August 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1996

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 3 July 1996, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: (continued)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued)

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Henze (Germany) Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES: (continued) (E/1996/4 and Corr.1, E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(a) COORDINATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ACTIVITIES FOR POVERTY ERADICATION (continued) (E/1996/61)

Mr. JIN Yongjian (Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services) said that, despite remarkable changes in the areas of economic development, world trade and technology, poverty continued to afflict the peoples of the world. The first step towards developing policies, plans and strategies to alleviate poverty was to recognize that it was a complex and multi-dimensional problem which required a multisectoral approach, including the strengthening of the capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to effectively implement poverty eradication programmes.

As part of its efforts to support the efforts of developing countries, the Department for Development Support and Management Services (DDSMS) provided countries in post-conflict situations with technical expertise to assist with reconstruction and rehabilitation. It fostered poverty alleviation among marginalized groups in rural areas through a variety of multisectoral programmes in integrated rural development in such areas as agriculture, infrastructural development, health, education and village-based community development activities. It had developed a distinct methodology to maximize beneficiary involvement in decision-making and in the management of those activities and its programmes considered the linkages between poverty and the environment in order to develop operational approaches that addressed immediate survival issues while taking account of the long-term environmental consequences of poverty. It also provided Governments with technical assistance to raise the socio-economic status of women, through projects designed to develop income-generating, management and technological skills.

His Department was developing an operational framework to actively participate in the implementation of the New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the United Nations System-Wide Special Initiative on Africa. In Tanzania, it had assisted the Government in formulating a training programme to promote awareness among economic planners of the likely social effects of structural adjustment policies. Poverty alleviation plans and strategies, however, must filter down to the local level and institutional linkages must be forged between the macro and micro levels. Indeed, development support activities could not succeed in the absence of a genuine partnership between policy formulation and local implementation.

Mrs. REBONG (Philippines) said that the establishment of the inter-agency task forces marked an important step towards strengthening coordination between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions in the fight against poverty. A similar need existed for coordination between the task forces and intergovernmental bodies and Member States in general. For example, reports on the activities and decisions of the task forces should be made available to delegations, and the Council should have an opportunity to discuss them with the Secretariat before final instructions were forwarded to United Nations representatives at the field level. Ultimately, such interaction would strengthen coordination between the United Nations and the appropriate government authorities.

Referring to paragraph 70 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61) concerning the need to develop various indicators, she noted that the inter-agency task force had been mandated to identify indicators for measuring progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the recent global conferences and in the implementation of economic and social policies. It would be useful to know what methodology would be used for the development of those indicators and whether the intergovernmental process would be involved. In its social reform agenda, the Government of the Philippines had identified 33 indicators for 10 basic needs and the task forces might wish to take the Philippine experience into account as it undertook its own work.

With regard to the reference (paragraph 128 of the report) to the need for "close consultations between the Bureau of the Council and the chairpersons of the functional commissions", her delegation understood that those consultations would involve the Council's entire membership and not only its Bureau.

She welcomed the statements of some representatives of the developed countries who shared the concern of the developing countries over the decreasing level of resources for development activities. Adequate resources were essential for the effective follow-up of the global conferences and her delegation hoped that the Council would devote enough time to the consideration of that issue.

Mr. ABDELLATIF (Egypt) said that while it was generally agreed that the United Nations system should intensify its efforts in support of government-led poverty eradication programmes, it was important to remember that the requirements of individual countries varied according to their economic structure, and that the international economic environment affected the ability of States to deal with poverty and the related issues of economic growth and investment.

The Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61) should have referred to the scale of the problem and the efforts that had been made to deal with it. That would have helped to put the importance of coordinating related activities in its proper perspective. Given the diversity of methodologies applied by the various agencies in the field, consideration should also have been given to the need for harmonization of methodologies as part of the coordination effort.

With regard to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 66 to 70 of the report, more details should have been given on the impact of declining development assistance on the ability of development institutions to deal with the poverty problem. While concurring with the premise of paragraph 66, that primary responsibility for poverty eradication strategies lay with the Governments, he pointed out that paragraph 67 made no reference to what steps should be taken when development resources were in severe decline. Indeed, it made no mention at all of the impact of declining resources on poverty eradication activities. Paragraph 72 should have made it much clearer that the recipient Government had primary responsibility for the formulation of the country strategy note (CSN). Similarly, regarding paragraph 79, his delegation felt that it was up to each Government to make decisions regarding complementarity between policy framework papers (PFPs) and the CSN.

Despite those comments, the Egyptian delegation hoped that the report would contribute to eliminating duplication of effort, helping to garner the support and resources needed to achieve the vital goal of poverty eradication.

Mr. SCHORI (Sweden) said that the uneven distribution of resources caused growing poverty and suffering for the majority of the world's population, while the rich got richer. Poverty was the enemy of peace, a threat to democracy and an obstacle to development. To fight poverty was therefore to struggle for peace, democracy and development.

The methods used by the international community to fight poverty must be continuously refined through analysis of the different situations of poverty and the various external and internal factors that caused it. Broad participation in poverty eradication programmes by the men and women concerned also enhanced the effectiveness and sustainability of development initiatives and at the same time promoted democracy. There could be no sustainable poverty reduction without empowerment of the poor.

With regard to the coordination of poverty eradication efforts, there was need for a more active dialogue involving partner countries, development planners, decision makers and the populations concerned.

Finally, poverty could only be alleviated with the assistance of a strong civil society. It was therefore imperative to promote grass-roots organizations, good governance, democracy, and human rights in order to strengthen civil society.

Women, who accounted for two thirds of the people living in extreme poverty, had a particularly important role to play in the eradication of poverty. Efforts to support gender equality were therefore crucial to social, economic and political development.

One of the obstacles to effective action was the fragmented nature of United Nations poverty eradication activities, particularly at the country level. In fact, Governments sometimes had to deal with as many as 15 to 20 United Nations agencies, which often pulled in different directions and at times even competed for funds. Fundamental structural and organizational changes were therefore needed in order to pull the system together.

For its part, the Council must strengthen its own ability to provide overall policy guidance for development cooperation. While efforts to improve coordination at the field level were continuing, the resident coordinator system, the country strategy note and the programme approach all needed to be further enhanced. In that regard, the functional commissions had an important role to play in promoting coordination within the United Nations system. Some

of the commissions had presented multi-year programmes for their future work. It was the Council's responsibility, however, to ensure a clear division of labour among the commissions and to coordinate their multi-year programmes with a view to reducing overlapping and enhancing their effectiveness.

While the primary responsibility for poverty eradication activities lay with Governments, there was also a clear need for international support from both traditional and new sources. For its part, Sweden would continue to assume its share of the responsibility to provide development assistance. He welcomed the earlier reiteration by the European Union of its commitment to the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance. It was necessary, however, for other Members of the United Nations to commit themselves to that target and to strive to fulfil it as early as possible.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that more than one billion people lived in inhuman conditions of poverty in both the developed and developing world. In keeping with its firm commitment to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, UNESCO made available to member States its technical expertise in the formulation of strategies, policies and programmes for combating poverty and promoting sustainable human development. It would also play an active role in the campaign to develop greater awareness of the need to combat poverty and exclusion, by distributing documents and participating in debates, in cooperation with the media, non-governmental organizations, municipalities and secondary school pupils.

More generally, and in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, UNESCO planned to draw upon the capacities and expertise of national universities to analyse and evaluate the state of knowledge about poverty in different countries, thereby facilitating the formulation of project proposals for submission to external funding sources.

UNESCO believed that poverty was a gross injustice and that the way to eradicate poverty was not through charity, but through empowerment of the poor. The Organization's mandate covered not only education but also natural and social sciences and culture, and its focus had been on disadvantaged groups, such as the least developed countries, indigenous populations, women, rural youth, the handicapped and the aged. It also contributed to capacity-building

and supported analyses of the root causes of poverty in specific cultural and social settings.

Its strategy for the eradication of poverty among rural women was based on the principle of strengthening the role of women in society. Given the increasing feminization of poverty, UNESCO hoped to encourage full utilization of national capacities in development planning with a view to making women working in the informal sector less vulnerable. In Africa, for example, a special project on women and water resources supply and use was being implemented.

UNESCO was very aware that while mankind had used its wealth and knowledge to explore space and reach the moon, it had failed to reach poor neighbourhoods and ghettos. It was that consciousness which shaped its operational activities.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) said that poverty was a major source of children's suffering, leading to increasing levels of violence, human rights violations, environmental degradation, overpopulation, and urban decay. Coordinated action on poverty required the creation of a global mechanism which would take account of the sectoral plans agreed upon at the recent major Conferences.

While the inter-agency task forces referred to in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1996/61) had an important role to play in poverty eradication, a global coordination mechanism was needed to help the international community develop a multilateral plan of action in support of national anti-poverty strategies.

Anti-poverty strategies should underscore the link that existed between action for poverty eradication and action for peace, and recognize the negative impact of poverty-led emigration on sending countries. Economic liberalization was vital in the long term for economic growth and development, but the poor needed cooperation between international organizations, Governments and non-governmental organizations to address the shortcomings of private sector-led development. Of equal importance was coordination with agencies concerned with transfer of technology and intellectual property.

The Lebanese authorities had already worked closely with United Nations agencies and international financial institutions on reconstruction programmes and strategies involving women in the fight against poverty. In the long term,

it was only by attacking the roots of poverty that such strategies could succeed.

Mr. DJABBARY (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the recent series of global conferences had clearly shown the need for international cooperation to tackle poverty. The international community should address the issue in a comprehensive and integrated fashion and in accordance with the needs and priorities of individual developing countries. Poverty should be addressed by investing in food production, health, education, human resources, productive employment and infrastructure and by promoting sustained economic growth. A more positive response from multilateral financial institutions to the challenges and opportunities for cooperation would necessitate a review of the functions and mandates of those institutions in relation to the United Nations system. However, cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions should not affect the universal, voluntary, neutral and multilateral nature of the financial resources of the United Nations in the field of development.

The Secretary-General's report failed to address the vital need for the creation of an enabling international environment conducive to the development activities of developing countries. However, his delegation fully agreed that poverty eradication strategies should be country-specific and that individual countries bore the primary responsibility for defining their own strategy in that regard. All poverty alleviation efforts should be in accordance with the priorities and development objectives of the Government involved. There was also an increasing need for a substantial increase in financial resources and harmonization of the efforts and activities of the United Nations system in the field of poverty eradication.

The intergovernmental task force mechanism should be used not only for coordinated assistance at the country level but also for coherent advice on economic and social activities consistent with the coordination mandate of the Economic and Social Council.

Establishing an enabling economic environment could not be considered in isolation from trade prospects, technology transfer, financial resources and other important issues. In addition, the activities of the various commissions and organizations in the field of poverty eradication should be carried out in a

coordinated manner in order to avoid duplication of effort and ensure equal treatment of all aspects of the problem.

Mr. GUBAREVICH (Belarus) said that the sheer scale of the task of poverty eradication made it necessary for the United Nations to take further systematic steps to enhance the effectiveness of the work of its institutional structures and harmonize their activities while avoiding duplication. His Government endorsed the pivotal role of the resident coordinator system at the field level and the subordination of poverty eradication programmes to national Governments. Cooperation in the field of economic and social development between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions was a key element in the fight against poverty. The programmes of the Council and its functional commissions should be strengthened through the mobilization of adequate funding which should be regular and predictable in nature. At the same time the Council should ensure greater coordination in the work of its functional commissions and eliminate areas of duplication. His delegation also endorsed the need for more effective incorporation of the gender perspective into United Nations activities for poverty eradication. The Council should be particularly supportive of the work of the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development.

In implementing its economic and social policies designed to eradicate poverty, the United Nations should take greater account of the specific needs and problems of countries with transitional economies. For Belarus, which had embarked on a programme of radical economic and social reform and had been stricken by the Chernobyl disaster, poverty was a relatively new phenomenon. Such country-specific factors necessitated a fresh approach to the task of eradicating poverty.

Mr. KOBAYASHI (Japan) said that the Secretary-General's report provided a clear picture of how the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies should harmonize and coordinate their activities in the field of poverty eradication. Eradicating poverty was an issue that cut across the themes of recent international conferences, and in pursuing that goal it was the task of the Council to provide clear policy guidance to its functional commissions and relevant intergovernmental bodies while at the same time establishing a framework for the

division of labour between them. Coordination and harmonization would be useful in reducing duplication of work in following up and implementing the outcome of international conferences.

Efforts to eradicate poverty must be comprehensive and promote not only economic growth but also development and social justice. Regarding coordination of United Nations support for and availability of resources to the United Nations system for facilitating national poverty eradication plans and programmes, his delegation agreed with the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report since they were consistent with the new development strategy which Japan had been advocating in various forums. However, full coordination among development assistance donors could not be achieved unless there was also coordination between the multilateral assistance organizations and bilateral donors which provided a substantial portion of development resources. Moreover, development cooperation was most effective when development assistance was combined with private-sector activities such as private investment and trade. The important role played by non-governmental organizations should also be considered. All of those elements, together with coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, were essential ingredients of a comprehensive approach.

His delegation considered that the best way to make such ideas a reality was to formulate model programmes or projects in which all bodies involved in development activities would be invited to participate.

Regarding the increasing feminization of poverty and efforts by the United Nations system to incorporate a gender perspective into poverty eradication programmes, his Government believed that specific measures should be taken to target women as the beneficiaries of development assistance. The participation of women in the formulation and implementation of all policies and programmes aimed at poverty eradication should also be promoted. The Economic and Social Council, in cooperation with the Commission on the Status of Women, should develop a system for monitoring and evaluating gender sensitivity as a matter of urgency.

In order to find ways of monitoring the performance of the United Nations in the field of poverty reduction, it was incumbent upon the Council to ensure the harmonization and coordination of all the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by introducing an integrated approach to the

intergovernmental consideration of poverty eradication. Each of the functional commissions should focus on poverty in relation to its core issue so that the issue of poverty could be addressed from various perspectives. The results of such an approach should be shared among the various commissions.

Mr. POWELL (World Food Programme) said that hunger was not just a symptom of poverty but also a cause thereof, since a person who was hungry could not produce and compete with one who was well-nourished. Acknowledging two basic facts - that hunger caused poverty and most of the hungry were women - had been the starting point in rethinking how the World Food Programme (WFP) targeted its food aid.

WFP needed to channel more of its aid through women and to give them control over managing and allocating those resources. Successful development projects directly related to women benefited communities as a whole. In emergencies such as Rwanda or Bosnia, the easy way out was to use the existing community power structure which tended to be male-dominated. WFP rejected that method since experience had shown that the task of getting food directly into the hands of needy families was more effectively accomplished by targeting women. It was pressing its field staff and its United Nations and non-governmental organization partners to follow new guidelines on involving women in assessing food aid needs, distributing food to households, and managing and monitoring overall distribution. WFP wanted to see women engaged at the outset in emergency operations and food aid projects for development. Just as important, women were key elements in healing the wounds of intra-State conflict, since peace required a focus on family, health and nutrition. In addition, WFP was involved in programmes to advance female education and literacy.

WFP participated fully in the current array of coordination machinery and supported nationally executed development projects. However, there were still areas where cooperation and coordination could be improved. Generally speaking, there was an inherent conflict between "safe" projects involving minimal risk and high rates of financial and economic return and working with abjectly poor people in remote and disadvantaged areas. It was therefore a challenge to coordinate the efforts of various partners such as government, non-government, bilateral donors, the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Mr. CHUN (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that the promising economic climate for developing countries at the start of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty offered those countries a real opportunity to achieve progress in poverty eradication with the help of the international community. In that context, the United Nations should continue to work with Governments on the formulation of country strategy notes and policy framework papers and should invigorate the role of the resident coordinator. While supporting the creation of new mechanisms for a more coherent response to recipient countries' needs as proposed in section I of the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/61), he said that the organizational work for those mechanisms should not, however, divert resources away from poverty eradication activities.

At the intergovernmental level, the Council should act as the primary forum for discussion of poverty eradication, playing a central role in harmonizing the work of the functional commissions to avoid duplication of effort and ensure an integrated approach. In that regard, the functional commissions should focus on the core issues of their particular competence, participating in meetings on specific issues as part of the coordinated follow-up to conferences.

By seeking to promote a clear division of labour, while recognizing the contribution of diverse approaches to poverty eradication, the United Nations system could make a meaningful contribution to the challenge of poverty eradication for the coming decade.

Mr. GALVEZ (Chile) said that the issue of poverty eradication stood at the top of national and international agendas, and was a yardstick by which to gauge the revitalization of the United Nations system. The Council, therefore, had a particular responsibility for promoting coordination of activities for that end, particularly at the national level.

By strengthening support for national poverty eradication strategies through the resident coordinator system and enhancing cooperation with institutions at all levels, the United Nations had demonstrated its commitment to concrete and practical action on issues raised at the recent major conferences. Yet, little could be done unless resources were adequate to the task. For that reason, the Council should make a clear plea for more resources from the donor community.

The international community should make a particular effort to support the least developed countries in Africa through the Special Initiative on Africa; it

was equally important that the gender perspective should be included in all future development initiatives and poverty eradication programmes.

Given the recent reforms of the Commission for Social Development, and the importance of its work on poverty eradication he called for a greater degree of high-level participation in its sessions.

The functional Commissions should focus on the core issues of their particular competence when addressing the issue of poverty. At the same time, given the increasing feminization of poverty it was important to support the efforts of the Commission on the Status of Women to mainstream gender into the work of other commissions. The Statistical Commission also had important work to do in that area.

In coordinating activities to achieve the eradication of poverty, the underlying purpose should be the realization of development which worked to the direct benefit of people in need.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

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Substantive session of 1996

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 3 July 1996, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. HENZE (Germany)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Gervais (Côte d'Ivoire), Mr. Henze (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (continued) (E/1996/4 and Corr.1; E/1996/18 and Add.1)

(b) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON THE THEME OF THE 1995 COORDINATION SEGMENT OF THE COUNCIL (E/1996/59)

The PRESIDENT drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General in document E/1996/59.

Mr. KHAN (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD)), introducing the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/59), said that the agreed conclusions of the Council's 1995 coordination segment had envisaged actions to be taken by the Council itself, recommendations to the General Assembly, and actions to be taken by the inter-agency machinery and organizations of the United Nations system.

Where the Council was concerned, progress had been made in establishing closer linkages between its work and that of its subsidiary bodies, such as the Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Council's decision to hold a debate on poverty also followed from the agreed conclusions.

Substantial progress had been made by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which had set in motion its discussions of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and had established the Inter-Agency Committee on Women. A large number of thematic inter-agency groups had been set up to monitor work at the country level and were providing input to the Council.

Ms. DENGO (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Secretary-General's report failed to provide analyses of progress achieved and problems encountered and did not contain specific recommendations on the issues involved. Nor did it specify ways to strengthen

the Council's function of coordinating development policies and activities at the level of the United Nations system. The Group of 77 and China considered such coordination essential, and therefore requested the Secretariat to provide such analysis and recommendations.

As the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of economic and social policy matters, the General Assembly should set the broad policy framework. The Council should integrate the work of its subsidiary bodies and coordinate the policies and activities of the United Nations system in the follow-up and implementation of major United Nations conferences. It should consider organizing its programme of work on a multi-year basis, as was already being done by the functional commissions.

The Group of 77 and China believed that the selection of cross-cutting themes for the work of the task forces established by ACC would have benefited from intergovernmental consultations. Moreover, United Nations development agencies should be allowed an active role in the work of the task force on an enabling environment for social and economic development. That task force should focus on an enabling international as well as national environment and should refrain from adopting World Bank-related approaches and conditionalities. The ACC task forces should submit their reports to the coordination segment of the Council's substantive session as a major input to intergovernmental deliberation and decision-making.

In the area of collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, the Group of 77 and China wanted greater emphasis on the implementation of the national and international commitments of developed countries in the context of the major United Nations conferences. While Governments had been implementing their commitments at the national level, resources pledged by the international community for the implementation of the recommendations of those conferences had not been provided at the agreed levels, thereby increasing the burden on national budgets. New and innovative ideas to secure adequate resources for international development were therefore of the utmost importance.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and also Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, the Slovak Republic and Slovenia, said that the results of the major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic,

social and related fields marked a new and more intensive degree of cooperation between the members of the international community in promoting the development of all people. The integrated nature of those results, which addressed a wide range of interlocking issues of fundamental importance, clearly demanded an integrated response; without proper and effective coordination, the roles envisaged in the various programmes of action resulting in the conferences could well come to naught. As the central mechanism for such coordination, the Council should consider the issue at an early stage as part of a continuous and ongoing process.

It was clear from the report (E/1996/59) that the agreed conclusions had been only partly implemented, yet the reasons for that situation had not been analysed in any real depth. Considerable progress had been made in strengthening inter-agency coordination at all levels; however, there was a need for increased complementarity and transparency between the work of ACC and the Council, particularly when they were addressing the same subject.

In the area of reporting, the initiatives being undertaken in response to paragraph 21.1 of the agreed conclusions were commendable; the necessary measures must be taken to prevent overlap. It was gratifying that more reports emanating from the Secretariat contained specific recommendations, although some of them could be more action-oriented. Further information should be given on the action that was being taken to implement paragraphs 20 and 21 of the conclusions, in particular regarding the role of the inter-agency task forces. Furthermore, there were still unacceptable delays in submitting reports.

Responsibility for the lack of progress must also be shared by Member States. There had been few real improvements in the working methods of the Council or the General Assembly. While there had been some progress in the area of the functional commissions, much remained to be done.

The most important element in the implementation of the conclusions had been the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/227; that resolution must be implemented promptly and, in particular, the Council should take up the provisions with respect to its subsidiary bodies as soon as possible. It was to be hoped that the negotiations on an agenda for development would be completed in the near future.

Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) said that the Secretary-General's report (E/1996/59) should have contained recommendations for more effective

implementation of the agreed conclusions, especially those concerning the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences in the economic and social areas. There was also a need for more specific recommendations to the General Assembly.

The linkages between an agenda for development and the follow-up to the conferences should be further elaborated. The Secretariat could recommend ways in which the implementation of an agenda for development and of the commitments adopted at the conferences could be mutually reinforced; the follow-up to the Council's decisions in that area should focus on substantive issues, not merely on discussion of the jurisdictions of the Second and Third Committees. Moreover, there was a need for the Secretary-General to identify ways to strengthen the work of the regional commissions, in particular with regard to their participation in the implementation of regional conferences.

In the area of inter-agency coordination, the priorities established by the General Assembly and the Council should guide the selection of themes by ACC. His delegation was unclear as to why the focus of the ACC thematic task forces was restricted to follow-up at the national level. It also wished to know how the themes selected by ACC related to those to be identified by the Council for recommendation to the General Assembly. Further clarification was needed as to why the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development had been made responsible for the general streamlining of conference-related reports including those dealing with subjects other than sustainable development.

The issue of mobilization of resources was of great importance to his delegation, as was the need to keep that issue distinct from the topic of new and innovative ideas for generating funds; such ideas could not be considered alternative options for fulfilling commitments on resource mobilization.

International cooperation for development had dwindled in recent years, despite the growing number of United Nations conferences. He urged Governments to make a clearer political commitment to re-establishing international cooperation in such truly crucial areas for economic growth as money, finance, trade, technology transfer and macroeconomic coordination at the global level.

Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) put forward a three-pronged proposal concerning the reviews of the Council's machinery requested by the General Assembly in resolution 50/227. First, in order to facilitate the review called for in paragraph 71 of that resolution, the Secretary-General should be

requested to collect background information about the products of those bodies, the nature of their deliberations, their relationships with other bodies and the source of their secretariat and expert support. A one-week resumed session of the Council could then be held early in 1997 to begin the review. Any further action or decisions could be taken during the 1997 substantive session. Second, the review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of the functional commissions and experts groups and bodies (resolution 50/227, para. 70) should be included as a sub-item in the agenda for the substantive session in 1997. Lastly, internal reviews of the regional commissions could be expedited by requesting the executive secretaries to initiate or complete their internal reviews, as appropriate, and to report to the Council at its substantive session in 1997. A further sub-item, on the examination of the reports, should be included in the agenda for that session. His delegation would be submitting a draft resolution embodying its proposal, which he hoped the Council would support.

Mr. YU Qingtai (China) said that the important consensus on the aims and principles of development cooperation reached at recent United Nations conferences needed to be followed up by concrete and effective action. Economic growth, particularly in developing countries, should be pursued with attention to social development and environmental protection. A holistic view should be taken of follow-up activities. Institutional concerns, such as strengthening the development role of the United Nations, should not distract from consideration of financial resources, technology transfer, improving the international economic environment, and other substantive issues.

The agreed conclusions adopted by the Council provided some positive suggestions for comprehensive follow-up to the major international conferences. The Council should taken action to ensure their implementation.

Ms. ENGELBRECHT (South Africa), after expressing her delegation's support for the statement delivered by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the agreed conclusions (E/1996/59) provided a useful starting-point for the Council's efforts and discussions.

Although her country had not been able to attend the World Summit for Children in 1990, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993, it was taking steps to

implement the recommendations of those conferences at the national level. South Africa had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995, and those rights were embodied in its Constitution. The principle of a "first call for children", whereby the needs of children were considered paramount, was incorporated in its reconstruction and development programme. International human rights instruments were the cornerstone of South Africa's human rights policy, and its Constitution guaranteed the rights of all and affirmed democratic values.

Referring to General Assembly resolution 50/161, she expressed her delegation's support for the strengthening of the Commission for Social Development. Since such issues as poverty eradication were being dealt with by various functional commissions, there seemed to be some degree of unnecessary duplication. Her delegation therefore agreed with the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1996/61) on refocusing the work of the functional commissions and improving the division of labour.

She noted the important role being played by the Commission for Sustainable Development in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The special session of the General Assembly to be held in 1997 should be viewed as an opportunity to coordinate a global partnership for sustainable development within the United Nations system. The special session would provide an opportunity for ensuring that the principles endorsed by the Rio Conference were being upheld, that the necessary resources were forthcoming and that the implementation of Agenda 21 was being continued.

Her delegation welcomed the enlargement of the Commission on Population and Development, which would facilitate the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development. Both the Cairo Conference and the recently concluded United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) had made important statements on the provision of adequate shelter for a growing and increasingly urbanized world population.

Increasing food self-sufficiency in Africa, where the rural population was largely engaged in agriculture, required investing in the poor and supporting measures to alleviate the effects of such natural phenomena as drought and encroaching deserts. Her delegation hoped that the forthcoming World Food Summit would take specific regional initiatives into account. It stressed the

importance of the broadest possible grass-roots involvement in the implementation of the recommendations of United Nations conferences.

South Africa's commitment to the empowerment of women was reflected in its Constitution, which prohibited discrimination on any grounds, including gender. Her country had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in December 1995 and would be establishing a Commission on Gender Equality. It was currently attempting to integrate gender considerations into all its national programme activities. In order to ensure an effective follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, the Council should examine, on a regular basis, the extent to which gender factors had been taken into account in the recommendations of all the functional commissions. The Beijing Platform for Action must be implemented throughout the United Nations system as an integral part of programming, including by bodies which did not ordinarily deal with the advancement of women. There was still a need for increased coordination and cooperation among the various organizations of the United Nations system. Lastly, an adequate flow of resources was vital to a successful follow-up in the case of all United Nations conferences.

Mr. SOEPRAPTO (Indonesia), after expressing his appreciation of the format of the report (E/1996/59), which greatly facilitated the discussion, said that inadequate resources and a lack of political will were a problem common to all follow-up efforts and that the most effective remedy would be the pursuit of new and innovative ideas for generating funds. Since the General Assembly was responsible for reviewing the implementation of each action programme, it should provide further political impetus for the implementation of the follow-up. That could be done through the high-level discussion of selected themes of follow-up, utilizing the mechanism provided by resolution 50/122, which called for a renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership.

Referring to paragraph 5.2 of the agreed conclusions (E/1996/59), he said that coherence and complementarity would be improved if the Council made policy recommendations to the Assembly regarding effective and coordinated follow-up to major international conferences. Concerning paragraph 6.1, on strengthening the role of the Council, he believed that, within the framework of cross-cutting issues, there was a need to build and pursue commonalities as the substantive basis for a coordinated and goal-oriented approach. Referring to paragraph 8.1,

he said that the discussions in the policy dialogue and the coordination segment with the Bretton Woods institutions should be more focused in the future. He agreed with the statement in paragraph 14 that the regional commissions had been active participants in the preparation of and follow-up to the recent international conferences. He wondered, however, why the role of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) was not adequately reflected in the report, particularly since ESCAP had been active in the preparations for the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development.

With respect to paragraph 16.1, he stressed the need for a coordinated approach in setting up multi-year programmes of work for the follow-up to and review of conference programmes of action, thereby establishing continuity from one conference theme to the next. In that connection, he also stressed the need for cooperation among the officers of the various bodies.

His delegation fully supported the ideas outlined in paragraph 18 of the agreed conclusions. Concerning inter-agency coordination, it believed that the mechanism provided by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had yielded results of varying effectiveness. The ACC inter-agency task forces operating at the field level should maximize such existing mechanisms as the field-level committees and the thematic working groups. The systematic exchange of information would improve the linkage between coordination at the Secretariat level and coordination at the intergovernmental level. His delegation also believed that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should play a stronger role in the task force on the enabling environment for economic and social development.

His delegation agreed that major cooperative initiatives had been launched by the United Nations system in many countries (para. 19.1). It would appreciate an explanation of the "global task forces" referred to in that paragraph.

With regard to cooperation between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (para. 23), he said that his delegation attached great importance to the establishment of modalities for bringing together the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly for the benefit of developing countries. In that connection, the General Assembly and the Council must play a central role in formulating

guidelines for further collaboration. Such guidelines should, inter alia, provide focus for cooperation at the field level. A closer relationship must be developed between the General Assembly and the Council on the one hand and the Interim Committee of the International Monetary Fund and the joint Bank/Fund Development Committee on the other.

The regrettable decline in financial support for the follow-up to United Nations conferences, for the Council itself and for official development assistance reflected, above all, a lack of political will. That situation must be remedied.

Ms. LEBL (United States of America) expressed interest in the suggestions put forward by the Group of 77 and China that the Council should consider organizing its programme of work on a multi-year basis and that the reports of the ACC inter-agency task forces, whose importance had become apparent during previous sessions of the Council, should be considered during the coordination segment of the Council. Referring to the Canadian proposal for implementing some of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 50/227, she said that the review called for in paragraph 70, which must be completed by the fifty-second session of the General Assembly, should be given priority over the review requested in paragraph 71.

Mr. GERUS (Belarus) said that there was a need to improve coordination of the measures taken by the United Nations to implement the conclusions and recommendations of recent major international conferences by adopting a comprehensive approach to the implementation of programmes of action. It being too early to assess the results of the new working arrangements introduced by the Council for agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, it would be more helpful to discuss the key principles underlying those arrangements. The Council and its subsidiary bodies must be guided by General Assembly resolution 50/227. The efforts to develop coordination at the country level, and in particular the establishment of the three inter-agency task forces, were commendable, and the development of a common database would be very useful.

The Council's work should focus on practical implementation of the decisions of the major international conferences, taking into account the interests of all groups of countries. That would make it possible to better coordinate the work of the subsidiary bodies and specialized agencies and

enhance the Council's role as the organ which formulated a political platform of concrete socio-economic action for development. The determination of priority objectives and areas of cooperation at the practical level for subsidiary bodies of the Council would make it possible to strengthen the coordinating role of the Council. Coordination efforts were being concentrated at the country level, and insufficient attention was being paid to ensuring consistency in the adoption of decisions on related questions at the level of the United Nations specialized agencies.

The Council should consider the need for further work by the regional commissions in implementing the results of global conferences. Belarus was interested in the activity of the Economic Commission for Europe in that regard. His delegation proposed that at the 1997 coordination segment the Council should consider the question of the role of regional and subregional organizations in the integrated implementation of programmes and plans of action of major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields. The consideration of that issue would help further enhance the work of the United Nations in assisting economies in transition and developing countries.

Cooperation between the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization was of the utmost importance in implementing the results of major international conferences and should be expanded with a view to providing technical assistance to countries with economies in transition. Effective follow-up to conferences was impossible without the mobilization of the necessary resources. The Council should endeavour to find additional sources of financing for programmes which were designed to resolve global problems in the interests of all mankind.

His delegation supported the idea of holding short special sessions of the Council to consider a question of interest to all groups of countries. That would enable the Council to take up a larger number of issues, react more expeditiously to recent developments, and respond more effectively to the needs of individual groups of countries. Consideration should be given to reducing the length of the Council's substantive session in order to make such sessions possible.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that UNFPA attach great importance to the follow-up to the recent major

global conferences and to effective system-wide collaboration to facilitate such follow-up, in particular, at the country level. The inter-agency task force on the International Conference on Population and Development had developed guidelines to assist the resident coordinator system and had prepared a common advocacy statement identifying key social and economic development premises endorsed by the United Nations system. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had subsequently expanded the mandate of the task force, which was chaired by UNFPA, to focus on basic social services for all.

The task force maintained close links with two other ACC Task Forces, on employment and sustainable livelihoods and on the enabling environment for economic and social development, and with the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, with a view to rationalizing and strengthening the delivery of coordinated United Nations assistance so as to enable countries to implement the goals of the conferences in the context of their development priorities and strategies. She described a number of the activities of the Task Force on basic social services for all, which sought to build on the resident coordinator system and the country strategy note. Resident coordinators had underscored the need to identify appropriate indicators for measuring progress in reaching conference goals and for monitoring programme effectiveness in relevant sectors and to devise guidelines covering, inter alia, modalities for building country capacity in the basic social services.

UNFPA emphasized coordination with its United Nations partners in its core programme areas: reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health; population and development strategies; and advocacy.

On the question of resources, she said that countries must make a concerted effort to mobilize domestic resources for social development priorities, and the international community must do its part to implement the Programme of Action agreed to at the International Conference on Population and Development and the instruments of the other major conferences. The 20/20 initiative should facilitate that process. The executive heads of the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Fund and UNFPA had recently sent a joint letter calling on their field offices to work with countries in implementing the 20/20 initiative.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO believed that, with full support for coordinated and integrated follow-up to the recent major global conferences it was not necessary to establish any new bodies for that purpose. Arrangements had been put in place in the UNESCO secretariat to ensure appropriate adjustments and modifications in its priorities and future programmes with a view to such follow-up.

The successful implementation of the resolutions adopted at the conferences could not be achieved by institutions and Governments on their own. It required the mobilization of all members of society, particularly of young people. A change in behaviour was required to achieve the goal of solidarity, without which there could be neither sustainable development nor sustainable peace.

UNESCO looked forward to the finalization of the terms of reference of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women. It was in the process of developing a coherent approach to the recommendations of the conferences pertaining to its spheres of competence. It had a specific role to play in: endogenous capacity-building; development of rural areas; fostering popular participation through democratization and respect for human rights; promotion of environmental awareness and rational use of resources for sustainable development; and improvement of communication worldwide through the use of new information and communication technologies and enhancement of access to communication.

UNESCO chaired the working group on basic education of the ACC Task Force on basic social services for all and had produced guidelines for resident coordinators. It was serving as task manager for chapter 36 of Agenda 21, and its mandate as task manager for environmental education had been further strengthened. She drew attention to the annex to her statement, which had been circulated, covering UNESCO activities in the field of education as a follow-up to major United Nations conferences. In conclusion, she underscored the importance of truly intersectoral mechanisms for coordination at the national and international levels.

Mr. ORDZHONIKIDZE (Russian Federation) said that most of the Council's conclusions and recommendations had been reflected in General Assembly resolution 50/227, which contained very specific suggestions. In some cases, however, the resolution merely made recommendations for further consideration instead of advocating concrete measures.

On the role of the General Assembly, his delegation felt that there was a need to reflect fully in an agenda for development concrete recommendations on enhancing the effectiveness and rationalizing the work of the General Assembly, through, inter alia, improving the quality of documentation, promoting a coordinated approach to the consideration of the economic and social dimensions of development, and utilizing the capacity of the bureaux of the General Assembly and its committees to improve coordination.

Where the strengthening of the role of the Council was concerned, there was a need to define more clearly the procedure for choosing themes for consideration in the coordination segment, so as to avoid lengthy negotiations each year. The Secretary-General's proposals for 1995 should be revived, and additional ideas and proposals from the Secretariat should be encouraged. In general, the Secretariat had succeeded in preparing a single comprehensive report for the coordination segment; however, while maintaining the general approach, the length of the report should be reduced to a reasonable level.

At the current session, the Council needed to consider the reports of the regional economic commissions and the harmonization and coordination of the agendas and programmes of work of the functional commissions. At the same time, the Bureau and the Secretariat should regularly submit concrete proposals to the Council on how to remove from the Council's agenda the items which had lost their relevance.

On the question of streamlining the work and strengthening the role of the functional commissions, a procedure and time-limits needed to be determined for the review of the mandates, composition and working methods of the functional commissions. The process should be started in January-February 1997 in order to enable the Council to agree on recommendations with regard to the future structure of its subsidiary bodies and adopt specific measures before the end of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly.

Regarding inter-agency coordination at all levels, his delegation stressed the need to adopt specific recommendations to ACC on a wide range of coordination problems, particularly since the coordination segment would be replacing the Joint Meetings of ACC and the Committee for Programme and Coordination.

Thus far, no far-reaching measures had been taken to rationalize the preparation of reports and reporting requirements. Although measures were under

consideration, there were no real parameters for results or a time-frame for their introduction. The process should be expedited, and the Council should make recommendations to the Secretary-General in that respect. Despite the political sensitivity and technical complexity of the question of reducing the volume of documentation, steps must be taken to enhance the quality of documents, cut the costs of their preparation, and ensure timely presentation.

The Council should adopt a decision that would make it possible to revert to the item under consideration at future sessions.

Mr. KHAN (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD)), replying to comments and suggestions made during the discussion, said, with reference to the observation that document E/1996/59 should have provided more analysis and recommendations, that the document should be viewed as complementary to the report of the Secretary-General on poverty eradication (E/1996/61) and the conference room paper on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 circulated at the current session (E/1996/CRP.3). It was for the Council to determine what intergovernmental action was required.

The comments made by delegation concerning reporting would be taken fully into account. A genuine effort was being made to provide consolidated reports to serve as the basis for the Council's deliberations and negotiations. The Secretariat had prepared a consolidated report extracting relevant elements from the reports of agency executive boards and funds, and the process would be extended to the functional commissions in 1997. The Secretariat also was focusing on streamlining and reducing the volume of reports in order to avoid proliferation.

Turning to cooperation between ACC and the Council, he said that ACC had made a concerted effort to respond to the agreed conclusions of the Council at the national, regional and global levels, as could be seen from document E/1996/18. ACC also had adopted a thematic approach to the coordination of the follow-up to the major global conferences.

The Council had been provided at its current session with ample information concerning the work of the ACC task forces established with a view to such coordination. The progress made by the task forces was a clear indication of the United Nations system's commitment to a coordinated approach to discharging the mandates established by the conferences and reflected the decentralized

approach advocated by the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the agencies.

In conclusion, he said that the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization were active participants in the ACC task force on an enabling environment for development, that the Council's comments would be brought to the attention of the task force, which was to meet very soon, and that the latter's report would in turn be brought to the Council's attention through ACC.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.